THURSDAY
March 21, 2024

BENGALURU
CITY EDITION
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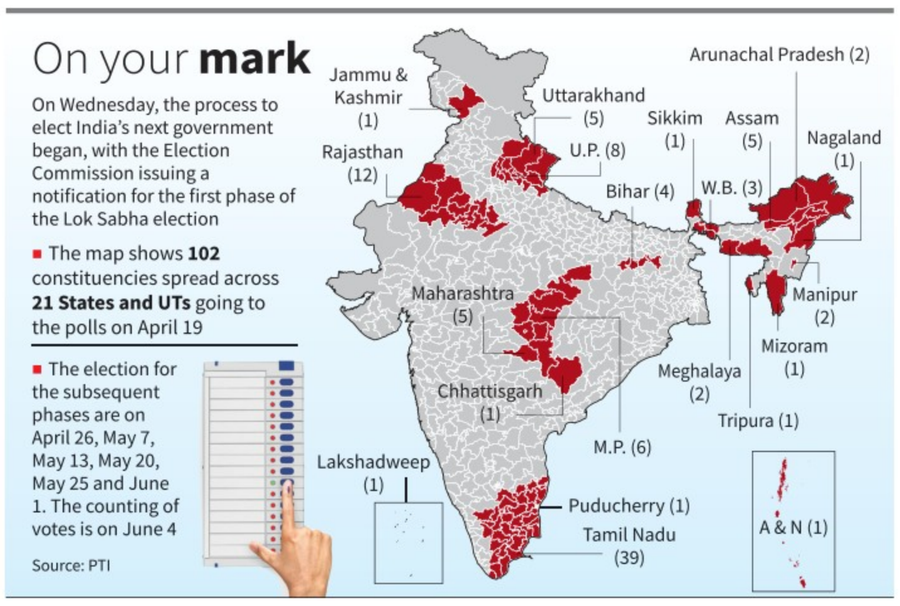
EC to monitor social media influencers

BENGALURU
To ensure accountability in political messaging on social media during polls, the EC will keep a close watch on social media influencers and those providing indirect publicity to parties or candidates. » PAGE 6

Eshwarappa intensifies attack on BJP

BENGALURU/SHIVAMOGGA
BJP leader K.S. Eshwarappa, who will contest against party candidate B.Y. Raghavendra for the Shivamogga seat, upped the ante by remarking that Mr. Yediyurappa's other son and BJP State president B.Y. Vijayendra would have to step down after the Lok Sabha poll results in June. » PAGE 6



REPORT ON PAGE 13

SC grants bail to ED officer

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed Enforcement Directorate (ED) officer Ankit Tiwari, who was arrested by the Tamil Nadu Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption in a bribery case, to be granted interim bail.

A Bench prohibited Mr. Tiwari from leaving Tamil Nadu without permission from the court.

The court ordered, on the basis of submission by the State, represented by senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Amit Anand Tiwari, that the officer should neither contact witnesses nor tamper with the evidence in the case. It has listed the case on April 29.

The officer had been allegedly caught accepting a bribe of ₹20 lakh from a doctor in Dindigul. He has been in custody for the past four months.

The ED has argued that the proceedings against him was an act of revenge by the State against the agency for registering cases against Ministers and powerful persons.

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In SC, Centre defends appointment of new ECs ahead of LS polls

Govt. refutes charge that it had rushed to fill vacancies with 'favourable' appointees, adds that move was necessary to conduct elections on time

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The appointment of Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Gyanesh Kumar, criticised as hasty and opaque, was a necessity arising from a constitutional duty to conduct the elections on time, the Centre told the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

The Centre was rebuffing allegations that it had taken advantage of the two vacancies in the Election Commission to fill the posts with appointees favourable to the present regime. The case will come up for hearing on Friday.

A petition by the Association for Democratic Reforms had argued that the new law, the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners Act, 2023, aided the government by giving it a dominant role in the appointment process.

The statute had countermanded a previous SC order, by replacing the Chief Justice of India with a Cabinet Minister as a member of the Selection Committee. The Centre said this argument suffered from a "fundamental fallacy" that the presence of a judge would guarantee the independence of the poll body.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

Pick and choose

A timeline of events that led to appointment of the two new Election Commissioners:

March 9: Arun Goel tenders his resignation, resulting in an unexpected second vacancy

March 14: Selection Committee, recommends two names. The President grants approval for the appointment

February 14: Anup Chandra Pandey retires as EC

March 15: Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Gyanesh Kumar take charge as the new Election Commissioners

T.N. police book case against Shobha

The Hindu Bureau
MADURAI/CHENNAI

The Madurai City police have registered a case against Union Minister of State Shobha Karandlaje, who is a contestant from Bengaluru North in the Lok Sabha election, on the charges of "promoting enmity between different groups of people on the grounds of language".

Ms. Karandlaje reportedly said that "people from Tamil Nadu, who come to Karnataka, get trained in Tamil Nadu and plant bombs in Karnataka", referring to the blast at The Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru. She later apologised for her statement.

Meanwhile, the EC on Wednesday directed the Chief Electoral Officer, Karnataka, to take immediate appropriate action on the complaint filed by the DMK against the alleged violation of the Model Code of Conduct by Ms. Karandlaje.

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Delhi Toofans: an underdog which has exceeded all expectations

The new team in the Prime Volleyball League, which is a blend of talented Indians and seasoned internationals, is proving to be a force to reckon with

B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Saikat Chakraborty
CHENNAI

A brand new team, a fresh batch of players, a revamped tournament format, and an underdog exceeding all expectations – that's the story of Delhi Toofans' maiden season in the Prime Volleyball League (PVL) as it gears up to face Calicut Heroes in the championship clash in Chennai on Thursday.

The inclusion of the ninth outfit necessitated a format change by the organisers. Earlier, a single round-robin format determined the top four teams advancing to the semifinals.

This season, however, the top five progressed to another round-robin league called Super 5. The winner of this secured a direct berth in the final, while the second and third-placed teams battled it out in the Eliminator.

In their initial 13 matches, Toofans have only suffered four losses and even enjoyed a seven-game winning streak en route to the Eliminator, where they edged past holder Ahmedabad Defenders in a thrilling five-setter. Led by the seasoned India International Saqlain Tariq, also making his PVL debut, the team defied all odds by defeating last season's finalist Bengaluru Torpedoes in its first match.

The core

Similar to other outfits, Toofans also boasts only two foreigners in the squad, placing the spotlight on the young Indian core under the guidance of veteran coach Manoj S. Nair. Players like S. Santhosh, K. Anand, Rohit Kumar, Anu James, and Amal Thomas have all stepped up when needed.

Santhosh, in particular, has garnered attention for his stellar performances. Currently, he is the league's leading scorer with a staggering 148 points. The 23-year-old outside hitter, hailing from Pudukkottai district of Tamil Nadu, also enjoys a significant fanbase. On the day of the Eliminator, Toofans fans held a poster emblazoned with 'Super Santhosh' as he competed against his former team.

"Santhosh is a superstar. He possesses everything. He serves well, attacks fantastically, and his game-reading is exceptional. He is the future of Indian volleyball," Toofans' Serbian attacker Lazar Dodic told *Sportstar*.

Dodic, who is 200cm tall, is also impressed by young Indian teammates. "The other Indians are genuinely good. They have the potential to play in Europe. The only aspect requiring improvement is the system. I see a very bright future for India in volleyball," he adds.

A surprise

Joining the PVL for the first time, Dodic lacked a clear understanding of the level of his Indian mates, but witnessing them in action left him pleasantly surprised.

"I was surprised by their exceptional skills. They are all fantastic and the training sessions were highly competitive," added Dodic, who has been instrumental in Toofans' success.

On the key difference between the European and Indian approaches to the sport, Dodic said: "In Europe, the primary focus is teaching players how to function within the system; everyone needs to understand their role on the court. I'm unsure how much emphasis Indians received on this aspect when they began playing." Dodic has a wealth of experience in various top European leagues.

Toofans' Colombian middle-blocker, Daniel Aponza, leading the blocking charts with 25 blocks and 27 rebounds, has also been thoroughly impressed.

"Manoj is a brilliant coach; he emphasises teamwork over individual performances. All my teammates are incredibly supportive as well, especially Tariq, who is one of the nicest volleyballer," said Aponza.

As Santhosh's smash secured a 17-15 victory in the fifth and final set against the reigning champion, propelling the team to the final, the crowd erupted. Tears of joy streamed down the players' and coaching staff's faces. Tariq, the first spiker from Jammu & Kashmir to represent India, is now on the verge of leading Toofans to their maiden title.

Irrespective of the result in the final, Toofans will be a team to watch out for as they have a blend of talented Indians and seasoned internationals. With a focus on teamwork, they are proving to be a force to reckon with in the league.

THE GIST

- In their initial 13 matches, Toofans only suffered four losses and even enjoyed a seven-game winning streak en route to the Eliminator
- Santhosh is currently the league's leading scorer with 148 points and the 23-year-old outside hitter also enjoys a significant fanbase
- Middle-blocker Aponza leads the blocking charts with 25 blocks and 27 rebounds
- Saqlain Tariq is the first spiker from Jammu & Kashmir to represent India

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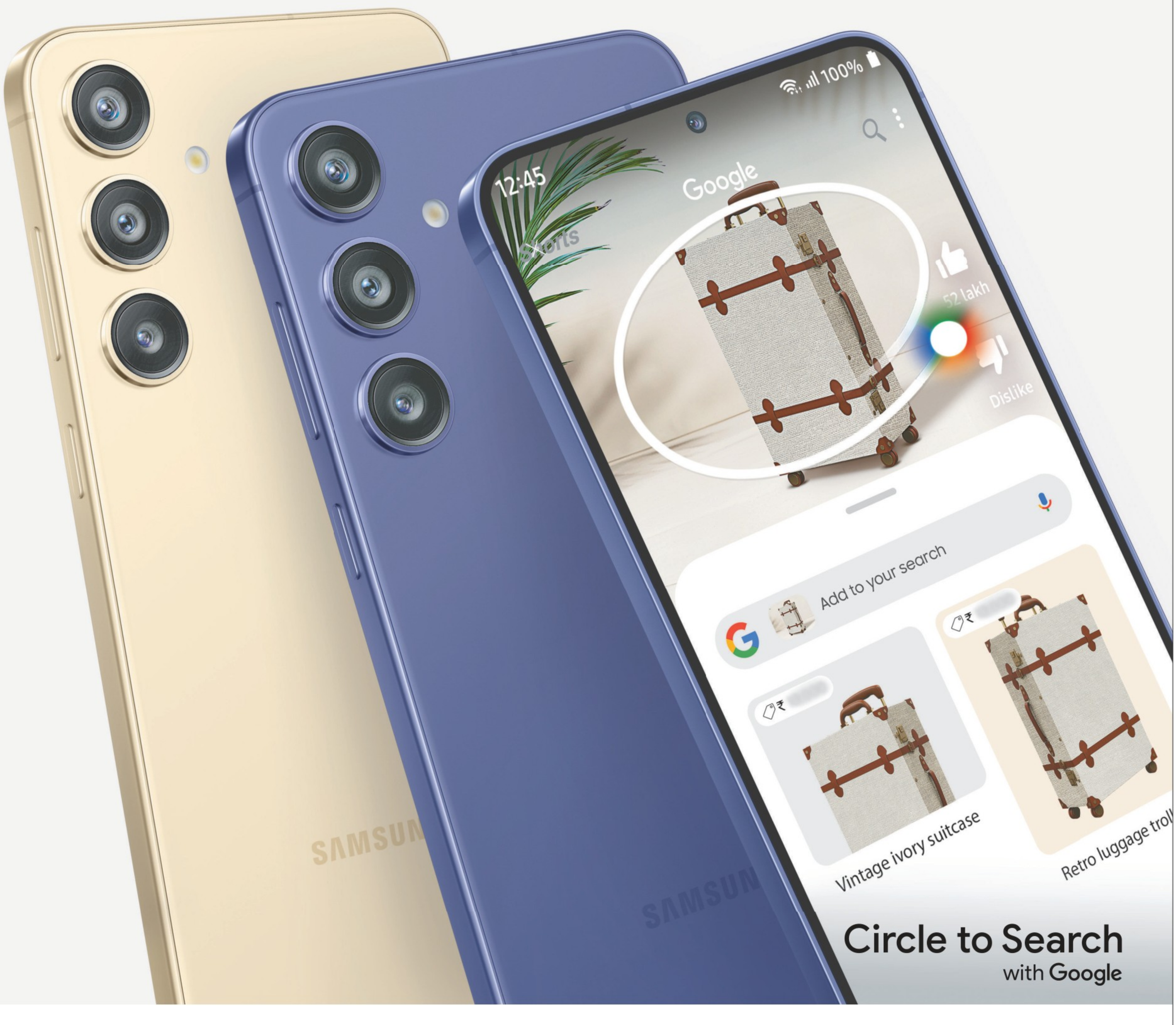

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J BG-BGE

Over 39,000 residential buildings regularly fined by BWSSB for failing to implement rainwater harvesting

In 2009, the water supply board ordered that it was mandatory to either recharge rainwater or store it in a sump or a tank, for new residences constructed on a 30x40 ft site

WATER WOES

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Despite several awareness programmes and penalisation by the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), the residents of Bengaluru remain reluctant when it comes to implementing rainwater harvesting (RWH) owing to infrastructure constraints.

According to the latest data provided by BWSSB, 1,96,591 residential buildings have implemented RWH systems and 39,213 buildings have not, despite being penalised every month. Since July 2016, the Board has been collecting ₹1.98 crore - ₹2 crore as penalty for non-implementation of RWH in residential buildings, every month.

In 2009, the Board ordered that it was mandatory to either recharge groundwater table by harvesting rainwater or store it in a sump or a tank, for new residences constructed on a 30x40 feet site. The Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage (Amendment) Act, 2021 made it compulsory for even old constructions on 60x40 feet and above sites to install RWH systems. "People are ready to pay penalty, but not to implement RWH systems," said Sanath Kumar, Additional Chief Engineer, Quality and Assurance Department, BWSSB. He said that while newer residences are more compliant with the rules as their plans do not get sanctioned without RWH, it is the older building owners who are more reluctant.

BWSSB officials expect more implementation of RWH systems in the city going forward. FILE PHOTO

Implementation of RWH

Residential buildings with RWH	1,96,591
Residential buildings without RWH	39,213
Penalty collected for non-implementation of RWH	₹1.98 - 2 crore per month

Source: BWSSI

"The ones who had built houses before the rules came into place, usually say that they have space constraints as they had already constructed the house on the entire site with no empty space for RWH. We are trying to educate them. Even then, some people neglect it and keep paying penalty," Mr. Kumar added.

With more awareness, BWSSB officials expect more implementation of RWH systems in the city going forward. "Under new rules which are in effect from March 15, we do not allow people to drill borewells if they do not have RWH systems," Mr. Kumar said.

As Bengaluru battles water crisis currently, residents who had previously installed RWH systems vouch for its benefits. "Since the construction of our house, we are harvesting rainwater, ensuring a consistent water supply despite the persistent water scarcity in surrounding areas. We have been living here for more than a decade and have never had to call for a water tanker or depend on Cauvery water supply," said Gururaj B., a resident of R.R. Nagar.

Defunct borewells to be used as recharging pits

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Amidst the ongoing water crisis in Bengaluru, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) will now convert all it's dry and defunct borewells into recharging pits to increase groundwater levels.

In a recently held press conference, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had said that out of 14,000 government borewells in the city, 6,900 have dried up.

On Wednesday, V. Ramprasath Manohar, Chairman, BWSSB, said that maintenance of the borewells which come under it is the water supply board's priority.

"For this purpose, we have to strategically repair the borewells. We will convert the borewells in which the water availability is less into recharge pits. We have also instructed officials to ask plumbers in their respective zones to take up various works under which completely dried up borewells can be used for groundwater recharging," Mr. Manohar said.

The BWSSB also conducted a training session for plumbers from all zones on Wednesday on recharging procedure for defunct borewells.

Of the 14,000 government borewells in the city, 6,900 have dried up. FILE PHOTO

Water crisis will not hit IPL matches in city

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Indian Premier League (IPL) matches scheduled to be held at M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru will be unaffected by the prevailing acute water crisis. It was speculated that the matches would be shifted out of Bengaluru.

According to a press release, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board has agreed to supply treated water from the sewage treatment plant located inside Cubbon Park for the matches.

On Wednesday, members of the Karnataka State Cricket Association met BWSSB Chairman V. Ramprasath Manohar on Wednesday and requested him to supply treated water from STP in Cubbon Park.

75,000 litres

The stadium needs 75,000 litres of water every day when a match is held.

Mr. Manohar has assured KSCA of providing treated water from STP Cubbon Park to the Stadium during match days.

According to the match schedule, three IPL matches will be held in the city on March 25, March 29, April 2.

'No using potable water for rain dance during Holi events'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) issued the much-awaited guidelines for Holi (which falls on March 25) on Wednesday.

While there is no restriction on the celebration of Holi in households or even as a public event, the Board has prohibited the use of potable water for any such event.

"There are no restrictions on the cultural celebration of Holi festival, but it is not right to organise rain dance and pool dance for monetary gains. Hence, in view of public welfare, Cauvery water or borewell water should not be used for rain dance and pool dance," said V. Ramprasath Manohar, Chairman, BWSSB, in the order.

Over 70 events

With more than 70 Holi events planned in the city involving rain dance and pool dances, citizens had raised concerns about wastage of water when there is a water crisis.

The organisers had, however, defended their decision saying that only recycled water will be used for such events and there will be only 10-20% of water wastage.

Water tanker: Citizens told to report price violation

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In the wake of the water crisis, citizens are receiving automated calls from the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) asking them to report violations of the price cap on water tanker loads in the city on the helpline number 1533.

The message said that if the water tanker suppliers were charging more than the rates fixed by the district administration, the citizens should report it to the BBMP helpline.

The district administration has capped the price of 12,000 litres of water tanker load at ₹1,200, when the distance between the source of water and its destination is within 10 km. However, most tanker operators argue that they are going as far as 20 km one way to fetch water and this price cap doesn't apply to them. Despite the price cap, many residents of the outer zones complain that a 12,000 litre water tanker continues to cost ₹2,000.

The district administration has capped the price of 12,000 litres of water tanker load at ₹1,200. K. MURALI KUMAR

Bag full of marijuana found abandoned

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The City Railway Police recovered a bag containing 2.6 kg of marijuana abandoned on a stone bench on platform number 4 at Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna Railway Station in the city on Tuesday.

Police Sub-Inspector Vasanth Kumar noticed the bag and checked with the passengers of Prashanthi Express who arrived a few minutes before, but no one claimed ownership.

The officials waited for sometime thinking that the owner might come to get the bag but in vain. Mr. Kumar checked the bag to find that it was packed with marijuana and taped to the bag inside. The value of the drugs seized is estimated to be around ₹2.6 lakh.

Mr. Kumar in his complaint said he suspected that the accused smuggled the bag in the train, but abandoned it and fled noticing police presence. Based on the complaint, a case has been registered.

Woman kills daughter, attempts to end life

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The woman strangled her two-year-old child to death before attempting to end her life over a row with her husband

The K.R. Puram police have registered a case of murder against a 24-year-old woman who allegedly strangled her two-year-old daughter to death before attempting suicide by slashing her throat over a domestic row with her husband in Seegehalli on Saturday.

The mother was rushed to a hospital and she survived. Her condition is critical and is being treated in an ICU. The police are awaiting the recovery of the accused Chinna to take her into custody for further investigation.

Chinna and her husband Lakshmi Narayana, a native of Chittoor, came to Seegehalli in K.R. Puram three months ago in search of work and lived in a rented house.

In his complaint, Lakshmi Narayana said that his wife was having suicidal tendencies due to health issues and used to fight with him frequently and threatened to kill the baby and end her life often. He said he used to pacify her.

On March 17, when he had gone to a temple, Chinna called her mother who lives in their native place and informed that she is going to die and kill the baby. Worried, her mother called Lakshmi Narayana who rushed home and with the help of neighbours broke open the locked door to find the duo in a pool of blood.

They were taken to a nearby hospital where the doctor declared the girl brought dead.

(Those in distress or having suicidal thoughts can call Arogya Sahayavani on 104 for help).

INBRIEF

International conference on temple management

Chanakya University is organising an international conference on 'temple management - historical, functional and futuristic perspectives' on March 21 and 22. Director of ISKCON's Govardhan Ecovillage, Gauranga Das Prabhu will inaugurate and deliver the keynote address. Ganti S. Murthy, National Coordinator, IKS Division, Ministry of Education, GoI, and Srinivasa Varakhedi, Vice-Chancellor, Central Sanskrit University, Delhi, will participate as chief guests. The programme will be held on the Chanakya University's premises, Global campus, near Kempegowda International Airport, Devanahalli, at 9.45 a.m.

BCU V-C to visit U.K. from April 25 to 29

Lingaraja Gandhi, Vice-Chancellor of Bengaluru City University, has been invited by the University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom, as a Visiting Research Scholar. Prof. Gandhi will be there at the U.K. University from April 25 to 29, 2024. During his visit, Prof. Gandhi, will share his expertise and knowledge to the ongoing Research Project Sustainable Smart Cities.

48-year-old woman and her 28-year-old twin sons found dead

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 48-year-old woman and her 28-year-old twin sons were found dead under mysterious circumstances in their house at J.P. Nagar III stage on March 20.

According to the police, Sukanya and her sons Nischith and Nikhith had suffered burn injuries. The police are yet to ascertain the cause of death.

In the morning, Sukanya reportedly handed over a glass of milk and the newspaper to her husband Jayananda who was unwell for the past few days. When the bodies were found, his room was locked from outside.

The incident came to light when neighbours noticed smoke and alerted the police. Police learnt that Jayananda owned a factory. His business incurred losses during the covid pandemic.

Jayananda was bedridden. Sukanya was giving private tuitions to take care of the family. The family was facing financial problems and they were unable to repay their loans or pay the rent for their home.

Nischith was physically challenged and was working from home. Nikhith worked in a private firm, but had quit his job four months ago.

(Those in distress or having suicidal thoughts can call Arogya Sahayavani on 104 for help)

Alok Mohan issues circular making helmet mandatory for police personnel

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Concerned over the rising number of fatal and non-fatal accidents involving police personnel while riding two-wheelers, Karnataka State Police Chief Alok Mohan recently issued a circular mandating all personnel to wear helmets as per prescribed standards with the straps while riding.

The circular issued on Tuesday directed all the unit heads across the State to ensure that the rule is enforced.

The circular was issued following the death of Vijaykant Mikali, 51, Assistant Sub Inspector attached to Dodwad Police Station, Belagavi district. He was killed in an accident near Yaragatti late Saturday night.

The victim was returning to his house in Yargatti after finishing duty at Dodwad station, when he lost control and slipped from the bike and hit his head on a road divider. He was not wearing a helmet.

Taking strong exception to this, Bhimashankar Guled, SP, Belagavi district suspended the station incharge Nandish for not enforcing compulsory helmet rule. Mr. Guled had made it mandatory for the police personnel to wear helmets.

Taking this forward, Commissioner for Traffic and Road Safety Alok Kumar submitted a report to the State police chief and got the circular issued.

According to Mr. Kumar, the recent Balagavi incident is not an isolated one as many police personnel, especially those serving in the rural parts of the State and personnel working in reserve forces, do not wear helmets while riding two-wheelers. This according to him is not only a violation of amended section 129 A and B of Motor vehicle Act, 2019 but also a major embarrassment for the department which has to enforce the law.

According to him many police personnel have a negligent attitude and do not wear helmets while riding bikes on official duty while some wear cross helmets which do not serve the purpose and are not recommended in the law.

As per the new amendments to the MV Act, 2019 the helmet should cover the full face and be as per standards prescribed by the law.

Right whales may never breed after run-ins with fishing gear

A new study has reported that even entanglements scientists classify as 'minor' have devastating impacts on the critically endangered right whales and that, surprisingly, potential mothers who suffer such entanglements have the lowest chance of starting to breed

Joshua Reed
Leslie New
Peter Corkeron
Rob Harcourt

Scientists estimate that before commercial whaling scaled up in the 18th and 19th centuries, there may have been as many as 10,000 North Atlantic right whales. Today, fewer than 360 of them remain. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

It sounds like a crime show episode at sea: In late January 2024, federal regulators learned that a dead female North Atlantic right whale had been sighted near Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. The whale was towed to shore, where more than 20 U.S. and Canadian scientists converged to perform a necropsy, or animal autopsy.

On February 14, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced that the whale was #5120 in a catalogue that tracks individual right whales. Further, the agency said, a rope that had been deeply embedded in the whale's tail had likely come from lobster fishing gear in Maine.

Entanglement in fishing gear is a deadly threat to these critically endangered animals. Scientists estimate that before commercial whaling scaled up in the 18th and 19th centuries, there may have been as many as 10,000 North Atlantic right whales. Today, fewer than 360 individuals remain. Almost 90% of them have been entangled at least once.

When whales become entangled in fishing gear, they use extra energy dragging it as they swim. If the rope is caught around their mouths, they may struggle to feed and slowly starve. Ropes wrapped around whales' bodies, flippers or tails can cut into the animals' skin and become deeply embedded in their flesh, as happened to whale #5120. This can cause infections, chronic emaciation and damage to whales' blubber, muscle, bone and baleen – the bristly structures in their mouths that they use to filter prey from the water.

North Atlantic right whales are legally protected, both internationally and in U.S. waters, including policies that seek to reduce deaths or serious injuries resulting from entanglements. However, even when entanglement does not kill a whale, it can affect individuals' ability to reproduce, which is critically important for a species with such low numbers.

In a newly published study, we show that even entanglements scientists classify as "minor" have devastating impacts on female right whales and that, surprisingly, potential mothers who suffer "minor" entanglements have the lowest chance of starting to breed. As researchers with expertise in marine biology, ecology and statistics, we believe our findings underline the urgent need for ropeless fishing gear that can reduce threats to the survival of this species.

Smaller females having fewer young

Understanding reproductive patterns is essential for supporting species that are critically endangered. North Atlantic right whales historically started breeding by around 9 years of age and gave birth to a single calf every three to four years thereafter for several decades.

Today, however, many females have yet to reproduce at all. Moreover, those that have successfully produced calves now don't produce another calf for more than seven years on average.

As we showed in a 2022 study, after an encouraging North Atlantic right whale population recovery from the 1970s through the early 2000s, the number of reproductively mature female right whales declined from 2014 onward. By 2018 there were only about 73 breeding females left, representing roughly half of all females and a sixth of the entire species.

Other research has shown that poor health and physical condition are making it harder for these females to even start breeding. Since the early 1980s, North Atlantic right whales have literally shrunk: Adults have shorter bodies than they did several decades ago. This trend is associated with entanglements in fishing gear. As is true for all mammals, decreasing female body size reduces the likelihood of reproducing. Smaller whales have fewer calves.

Low calving rates are a significant factor in North Atlantic right whales' decline, so it is important to understand what causes them. Many organisations are involved in tracking North Atlantic right whales, including government agencies, aquariums and conservation groups. Photos taken from the air enable researchers to identify individuals and so monitor whale population trends, births and deaths, ocean habitat use patterns, health, and rates of scarring from entanglements and collisions with ships.

Our new study found that female right whales who have experienced even a minor entanglement before reaching sexual maturity may not ever start to breed. Even females who have previously reproduced are less likely to breed again following an entanglement event.

We determined this by using a mathematical model to incorporate information on the identity of individual whales, derived from photographs of natural markings known as callosities on the whales' heads. By identifying and photographing whales repeatedly over time, scientists can estimate different stages of their life, such as when females give birth.

> The number of reproductively mature female right whales declined from 2014 onward. By 2018 there were only about 73 breeding females left, representing roughly half of all females and a sixth of the entire species

Weakness of current regulations

Researchers categorise the severity of injuries that result from entanglements as minor, moderate or severe. The scientists who manage the right whale catalogue classify scars or injuries on the skin as minor if they are smaller than 2 cm without entering the blubber. If they are larger and enter the blubber, they are classified as moderate. Injuries that extend deep into the muscle or bone are categorised as severe.

Our research makes it clear that such value-laden terms are potentially misleading because even minor entanglements can threaten whales' successful reproduction.

Multiple laws ostensibly protect North Atlantic right whales, including the U.S. Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act, and Canada's Species at Risk Act. In our view, these measures do not give enough weight to preventing all types of entanglements, regardless of severity.

Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the NOAA develops and implements conservation plans and so-called Take Reduction Plans, which are designed to minimise wildlife deaths and serious injury resulting from commercial fishing gear.

The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan, developed in 1997, requires fishers to use weak links, with a maximum breaking strength of 771 kg, to connect lobster and crab pots to buoys on the surface. These links are intended to break when whales swim into them, so that the whales do not become entangled and weighed down by ropes and traps.

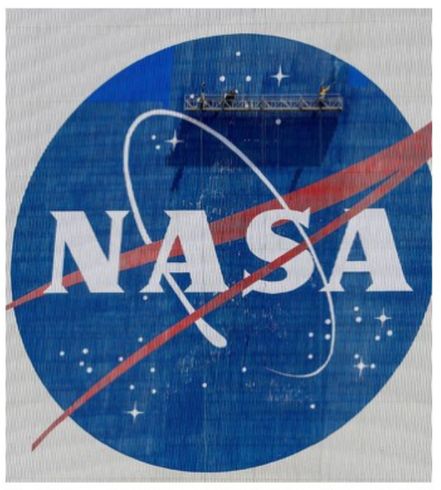
The plan also requires fishers to use heavy ground lines to connect multiple traps or pots. These lines are designed to sink to the bottom rather than floating in the water column. And the plan closes trap fishing areas seasonally when whales are known to be present in those zones.

Coming back from the brink

Current population estimates suggest that the numbers of North Atlantic right whales could be stabilising, meaning that the number of deaths is approximately equal to the number being born. While these estimates seem promising, females need to start and continue producing calves to increase whales' numbers.

From our work, it is very clear that both lethal and sublethal impacts of entanglements are of grave concern for these whales. As we see it, eliminating entanglement, not mitigating it, is the only way to avoid the extinction of this species. Every entanglement, whatever its severity, is bad news for the whales.

(Joshua Reed is a research associate in biology, Macquarie University; Leslie New is an assistant professor of statistics, Ursinus College; Peter Corkeron is an adjunct senior research fellow, Centre for Planetary Health and Food Security, Griffith University; and Rob Harcourt is a professor of marine ecology, Macquarie University. This article is republished from The Conversation.*)*



Collision with NASA spacecraft altered the asteroid Dimorphos' shape. REUTERS

NASA craft that diverted space rock also dented it

Reuters

When NASA sent its DART spacecraft to slam into the asteroid Dimorphos in 2022, the U.S. space agency demonstrated it was possible to change a celestial object's trajectory, if needed, to protect the earth. It turns out this collision changed not only the asteroid's path but its shape as well.

The asteroid, which before the DART encounter looked like a ball that was a bit plump in the waist, now appears to be shaped more like a watermelon – or, technically, a triaxial ellipsoid, scientists have said.

"The prevailing understanding is that Dimorphos is a loosely packed agglomeration of debris ranging from dust to gravel to boulders. Thus, its global strength is quite low, allowing deformation much more easily than for a solid monolithic body," said Steve Chesley, a senior research scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in California and a co-author of the study published in the *Planetary Science Journal*.

"The shape change was so dramatic because of its rubble-pile composition," said JPL navigation engineer and study lead author Shantanu Naidu. "By measuring the pre- and post-impact orbit of Dimorphos, we were able to deduce the change in the shape of Dimorphos due to the DART impact."

The spacecraft collided on September 26, 2022, at about 22,530 kph into Dimorphos, which was about 170 metres wide, roughly 11 million km from the earth.

Dimorphos is a moonlet of Didymos, which is defined as a near-earth asteroid. The DART (Double Asteroid Redirection Test) mission was a proof-of-principle mission using a spacecraft to apply kinetic force to nudge a celestial object that otherwise might be on a collision course with the earth. Dimorphos and Didymos do not pose an actual threat to the earth.

The spacecraft collided on September 26, 2022, at about 22,530 kph into Dimorphos, which was about 170 metres wide, roughly 11 million km from the earth. Didymos has a diameter of about 780 metres.

DART's collision, which sent rocky debris from the asteroid flying into space, also changed the orbital path that Dimorphos takes around Didymos - making it elliptical instead of circular - and its orbital period, the time it takes to complete a single orbit, the scientists said. It now takes Dimorphos 15 seconds less than before the impact to complete an orbit, they found.

Scientists had previously disclosed that the asteroid's orbit had changed, with the new study offering the most precise readings yet.

Dr. Chesley said the asteroid's orbital period continued to decay slowly in the weeks after the impact.

"We believe this is due to the fact that loose debris in the system continues to leak out and carries angular momentum with it, thus necessarily contracting the orbit," he added. Angular momentum refers to how much a rotating object's mass is distributed around its axis and how quickly it is spinning.

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

Space observatories: our eyes in the sky

Vasudevan Mukunth

Please send in your answers to science@thehindu.co.in

QUESTION 1

This observatory studies the universe in gamma rays from low-earth orbit. It shot to fame by discovering the first pulsar that emitted only gamma-ray radiation. Name the observatory.

QUESTION 2

Japan launched this probe in 2010 to study interplanetary dust and gamma-ray bursts, among other things. But its main claim to fame? It was the first spacecraft to successfully use a solar sail to propel itself. A solar sail is a sail that uses the solar radiation pressure like a sailboat uses wind to move. Name the probe.

QUESTION 3

This spacecraft is India's first dedicated space telescope. Launched in 2015, it was distinguished by the fact that it's a multi-wavelength telescope: it can study various phenomena in the universe in several wavelengths, providing a more complete picture of their causes and effects. Name it.

QUESTION 4

The European Space Agency launched this observatory in 2013 for astrometry, i.e. precisely tracking the relative positions and motion of stars and planets. With this information, scientists hope to prepare a "3D space catalogue". Name the observatory.

QUESTION 5

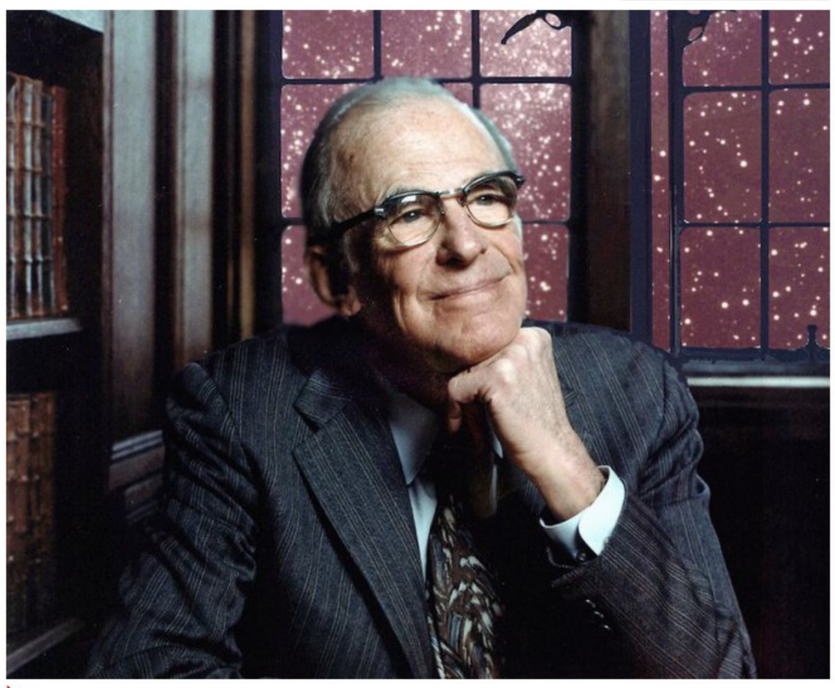
Between 1990 and 2003, NASA launched four powerful telescopes to study the universe in specific wavelengths. Which is the one that studies the universe in X-rays? Hint: NASA recently announced it would shut operations with this telescope due to budget cuts.

Answers to March 19 quiz:

1. Coral reef system declared a World Heritage Site in 1981 – **Ans: Great Barrier Reef**
2. Leading cause of coral bleaching – **Ans: Rising ocean temperature**
3. Creatures primarily responsible for building coral reefs – **Ans: Coral polyps**
4. Australia-based scientist dubbed the "reef sentinel" – **Ans: Terry Hughes**
5. Another name for coral reefs because they protect coastlines – **Ans: Rainforests of the oceans**

Visual: **Fagatele Bay**

First contact: K.N. Viswanathan | Vikas Singh | Yogapriya K. | Ashraf Basha | Vijayram Ganasala



Visual: Name this American astronomer whose 1946 paper set the stage for the world's first space telescopes. He also has a Great Observatory named for him. NASA

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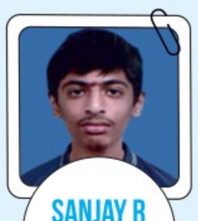
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NEWS IN NUMBERS

The profits Ukraine will receive from frozen Russian assets

2.5-3 in billion euros. The European Commission proposed to transfer to Ukraine profits generated by Russian central bank assets frozen in Europe. REUTERS

The IMF bailout tranche for which Pakistan got approval

1.1 in $ billion. Pakistan reached a tentative deal to unlock the tranche of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout deal. Pakistan sketched a $3 billion deal with the IMF as it battled a balance-of-payments crisis. AFP

Inflation in the U.K. slows to its lowest in 2.5 years

3.4 in percentage. The Office for National Statistics said inflation reached its lowest level since September 2021. The drop may give a boost to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his Conservative party. AFP

JSW MG Motor India's investment to increase production capacity

5,000 in ₹ crore. JSW MG Motor India will invest the amount to enhance production capacity and launch one new car every 3-6 months. PTI

The amount Google was fined by French regulators

272 in $ million. France's competition watchdog hit Google with another fine tied to a dispute over payments to French publishers for their news. AP

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On the mass kidnappings in Nigeria

Who is behind the mass abductions in Nigeria and what do they want? What has caused the recent surge in kidnappings? Why do they specifically target schoolchildren? What is the government doing to improve the security situation?

EXPLAINER

Sumeda

The story so far:
Battling its worst economic crisis in years, Nigeria is also facing serious security challenges amid a resurgence of kidnappings in its troubled northern region. Over 600 people, including at least 300 schoolchildren, have been kidnapped in the northeastern and northwestern parts of the country since the end of February.

What is the latest crisis?
Reports of a mass abduction first emerged from a remote area in northeastern Borno earlier this year. On February 29, suspected Boko Haram militants abducted at least 200 internally displaced people, mostly women and children, while they were gathering firewood outside their camps, in the Ngala Local Government Area. Similar incidents were reported from the northwestern region in quick succession. On March 7, 287 students were kidnapped from a government school in the Chikun area of Kuriga town in Kaduna State. The attackers abducted children and a few staff members, demanding one billion naira (about $6,00,000) for their release. Around 48 hours later, assailants attacked a boarding school in Sokoto State at around 1 a.m., abducting 15 children from the hostel as they slept. The gunmen fled before security forces could arrive. Tragedy struck the northern region again on March 11. Sixty-one people were kidnapped from a village in Kaduna. Nearly 100 others were abducted by gunmen in two attacks in Kaduna between March 16 and March 17

The spate of kidnappings drew condemnation from human rights activists, with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk saying that he was "appalled" by the recurrent mass abductions. He called for perpetrators to be identified and brought to account "as a first step towards reining in the impunity that feeds these attacks and abductions."

Living in fear: Waiting for news about the kidnapped students in Kaduna, Nigeria, on March 9. AP

Nigeria last experienced a surge in targeted attacks on educational institutions in 2021. Approximately 150 students were kidnapped by armed men in four months. Although most were eventually released, at least five were killed. The 2014 kidnapping of 276 girls by Boko Haram insurgents from a school in the Chibok town of Borno State continues to be one of the worst crimes committed in recent years. Of the 276, several were forced to marry and endure physical and psychological abuse. A decade later, 98 are still missing.

Who's behind the mass abductions?
At the time of the first attack in February, Boko Haram emerged as the primary suspect, given its track record of violence in Nigeria. The group has been engaged in a prolonged insurgency, causing widespread devastation and displacement. Kidnapping has been a key component of their terror tactics. However, with no organisation claiming responsibility for the recent abductions, there are suspicions that local armed gangs in these regions, commonly referred to as bandits, might be behind the incidents. Relatively new actors in the turbulent security landscape, bandits are believed to be an outcome of years of conflict over land and water between nomadic herdsmen and farming communities. While disputes earlier centred around such basic needs, bandits have evolved into organised armed groups in recent times. They have taken to looting, kidnapping for ransom, and forcibly seizing control of valuable assets like gold mines and farmlands.

What's fuelling the surge?
The rise of kidnapping as a 'lucrative' industry in Nigeria has stemmed from a combination of economic, security, and political issues, including a struggling economy, high unemployment rates, surging inflation, increasing food insecurity, and instability in the Niger delta. Ransom payments have become the primary motivation behind the kidnapping incidents, as successive governments have struggled to tackle these complex security challenges. Africa-focused consulting company SBM Intelligence says Nigeria faces security crises across all six geopolitical zones, including threats from Boko Haram, bandit groups, criminal gangs, sea piracy, and agitation by armed separatists.

Nigeria's economic challenges have worsened due to monetary policies which caused the currency to plummet against the dollar, leading to widespread protests and increased desperation. This, in turn, drives youth to join armed gangs. The ransom menace has escalated in recent years, with armed gangs controlling significant territories and amassing a formidable arsenal of weapons. These gangs have seized control of mining sites and farmlands, forcing rural residents into labour and threatening the country's food security by controlling vital agricultural areas. As per former federal lawmaker Shehu Sani, bandits target schoolchildren because they know "it will evoke public sympathy for the pupils, and pressure will be mounted on the government to bow to their demands."

How has the government responded?
While government security forces are working to obtain the safe release of the victims, President Bola Tinubu has rejected the idea of paying ransom for nearly 600 people abducted in separate incidents this month. Notably, in Nigeria, anyone found paying a ransom to free a hostage could face at least 15 years in jail. This law was enacted in 2022 due to the prevalence of kidnappings for ransom in the region. Security operations, however, are expected to last months as forces navigate the remote forest areas where the victims are being held. Activists say the government must initiate dialogue with the bandits to resolve the ongoing conflict, expressing concerns over the potential consequences of using force.

THE GIST

- On February 29, suspected Boko Haram militants abducted at least 200 internally displaced people, mostly women and children, while they were gathering firewood outside their camps, in the Ngala Local Government Area.
- The rise of kidnapping as a 'lucrative' industry in Nigeria has stemmed from a combination of economic, security, and political issues, including a struggling economy, high unemployment rates, surging inflation, increasing food insecurity, and instability in the Niger delta.
- While government security forces are working to obtain the safe release of the victims, President Bola Tinubu has rejected the idea of paying ransom for nearly 600 people abducted in separate incidents this month.

Why has Karnataka banned certain colouring agents?

Where were these harmful agents found? Which are the colouring agents rendered as harmful? What are the stipulated penalties if manufacturers are found using these chemicals?

Sharath S. Srivatsa

The story so far:
Karnataka became the third State in South India to ban the use of certain colouring agents in cotton candy and gobi manchurian that are found to be harmful. The decision follows similar steps taken in Tamil Nadu and Goa, and came after a survey by the Public Health Department that showed the presence of harmful chemicals present in the food samples, making them unsafe for consumption. The government has also clarified that there is no ban on making cotton candy as long as these colouring agents are not used.

What did the survey results show?
Samples in the State were collected from February 12 and submitted for laboratory tests, which then revealed the presence of harmful chemicals in many samples. Of the 25 cotton candy samples collected, 15 were termed as unsafe as they contained colours, while the rest were safe samples as they were made without added colours. Among the 171 samples of gobi manchurian collected, 107 samples were declared unsafe due to added colours, while 64 were declared safe as they did not contain added colours.

What were the harmful chemicals?
The unsafe samples with added colours showed traces of sunset yellow, tartrazine and rhodamine-b in cotton candy. Similarly, the unsafe samples of gobi manchurian had tartrazine, sunset yellow and carmoisine. A ban is already in place over the use of colouring agent rhodamine-b, a suspected carcinogenic substance. In the case of tartrazine, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said that although it is an approved artificial food colour, there are restrictions on its usage. There is a list of food items in which it can be used, with the amount to be used also prescribed. However, these conditions are only for packed food items; tartrazine cannot be used for food items which are freshly prepared, he said.

While notifying the ban of harmful chemicals, the Food Safety Commissioner said that the prolonged use of snacks that contain artificial colours can lead to deadly diseases such as cancer.

What are the penalties?
As per Rule 16 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (Food Products Standards and Food Additives Regulation 2011), no artificial colours should be used in the preparation of gobi manchurian. The same rules allow certain food colours to be used within the approved limits, while non-permitted colours, including rhodamine-b, should not be used in the preparation of cotton candy.

The cancellation of licence for commercial activities, hefty fines and jail term have been threatened against the offenders. The Food Safety and Standards Act stipulate a fine of not less than ₹10 lakh and a jail term of a minimum of seven years, extending to life imprisonment, against those using banned chemical substances in food products.

What next?
Health safety officials assert that the ban on the use of harmful chemicals has come into effect immediately. While the Government plans to create awareness among manufacturers, it has also urged consumers to be aware of what they are consuming. The notification advised the public not to use, or use minimally, food items prepared with artificial colours. Random checks will be conducted to ascertain adherence to the legal provisions.

Besides gobi manchurian, other popular food products such as kebabs in which colouring agents are used is likely to come under the scanner.

THE GIST

- Karnataka became the third State in South India to ban the use of certain colouring agents in cotton candy and gobi manchurian that are found to be harmful.
- While the Government plans to create awareness among manufacturers, it has also urged consumers to be aware of what they are consuming.
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Metro station guard misbehaves with woman, suspended

The victim, in her complaint, said she was waiting at the platform for the train when the accused touched his private parts staring at her

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The BMRCL on Wednesday suspended a security guard for sexually harassing a woman passenger at Jalahalli metro station platform in broad daylight. The victim was standing at the platform waiting for the train when the accused misbehaved with the woman, touched his private parts staring at her. The victim recorded his behaviour on her mobile. A video of the incident has gone viral on social media.

The victim, in her complaint to BMRCL, stated that she felt terrible since it happened in broad daylight and she doesn't feel safe anymore on Namma Metro. Despite raising concerns with the metro authorities and providing video evidence, the woman alleges no action was taken. She requested the officials to take action against the accused and also tagged the city police.

"Around 2.30 p.m. today, I experienced someone constantly staring at me and making certain gestures," she said. "I questioned him, but he kept staring at me and making gestures. He left after I started making the video," the woman added in her complaint. Taking cognizance, the BMRCL officials identified the accused and suspended him pending an inquiry.

"In response to the complaint, the said security guard has been placed under suspension pending detailed investigation. Any action detrimental to safety and security of women passengers, BMRCL has a zero tolerance policy," a statement from BMRCL said. Recently, a case of sexual harassment on female staff members by a metro officer was registered at the Subramanya Nagar police station.

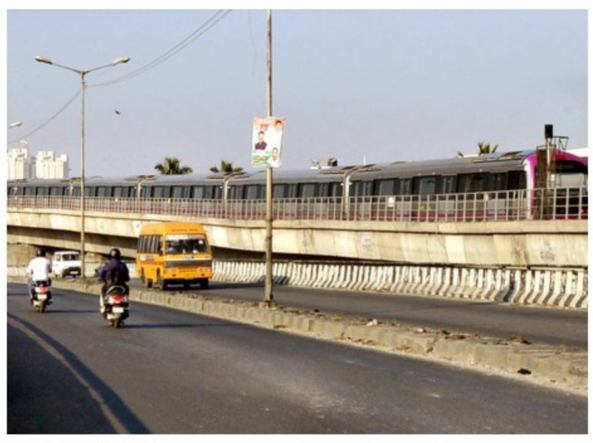
Yellow Line and Blue Line metro to be linked by travelator and walkway

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) is set to install a travelator and walkway to facilitate seamless connectivity for commuters between two lines. This initiative is a vital component of its ongoing Phase-II projects, BMRCL officials said.

"Our plan entails the construction of a 250-metre-long skywalk with an integrated travelator to seamlessly connect the Central Silk Board Station on the Yellow Line and the Blue Line. This marks the debut of a travelator within Namma Metro," a senior BMRCL official said.

The BMRCL plans to transform the Silk Board junction into a bustling transport hub with the establishment of two bus stations, designated pick-up and drop-off bays, and the development of multi-level parking infrastructure in collaboration with Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation.


The initiative aims to facilitate seamless connectivity for commuters between the two lines. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

The Central Silk Board junction in the city is infamous for its chronic traffic congestion.

Recently, the BMRCL announced that three out of the five ramps under construction at the location are nearing completion, with an expected finish date by the end of May this year.

"Upon completion, the three ramps will enable smooth traffic flow for vehicles originating from the Jayanagar-BTM Layout side, providing convenient access to HSR Layout and Electronics City," officials said.

Meanwhile, the ongoing construction of the 18.82-km metro line linking R.V. Road with Bommasandra, which is the Yellow Line, is expected to commence commercial operations by the end of this year.

This elevated metro route spans 16 stations and intersects with the Green Line at R.V. Road Station and the Pink Line at Jayadeva Hospital Station. This line incorporates a metro-cum-road flyover stretching 3.13 km from Ragi Gudda to Central Silk Board, strategically designed to alleviate congestion at Central Silk Board Junction. Additionally, the route features five loops and ramps, extending the double-decker flyover towards K.R. Pura and Hosur Road, both of which are currently in the advanced stages of construction.

Air India offers self-service check-in facility

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Air India is now offering self-service check-in and self baggage drop facilities for its passengers travelling to San Francisco from Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru.

Air India said that it is the first and only airline to offer this automated facility for U.S.-bound passengers from India.

The facility is already available for the domestic flights of Air India from the airport and plans are underway to extend this service to Singapore and Male, the two other international destinations Air India operates to from Bengaluru.

The airline said that the automated initiative will offer a smooth and seamless airport experience to a large number of our tech-savvy guests travelling from Bengaluru, the Silicon Valley of India, to the U.S. Silicon Valley - the tech hub of the world.

Inaugurating the facility on Wednesday, Donald Hunter, head Global Airport Operations and Ground Handling, Air India, said, "We are focussed on elevating customer experience at every touchpoint. This facility eliminates waiting time for check-in at the counters and offers our passengers a smooth pre-boarding experience. We have plans to extend this facility for our flights at more Indian and global airports."

Shivamogga airport handled over 26,000 passengers in first six months

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Shivamogga airport in its first six months of operations servicing four routes handled 26,086 passengers with a chunk of them being travellers on the Bengaluru-Shivamogga route.

The airport started commercial operations on August 31, 2023, with Indigo offering flight services on the Bengaluru-Shivamogga sector.

From August 31, 2023, to January 31, 2024, around 15,485 passengers travelled on this route, as per the Directorate General of Civil Aviations (DGCA) city pair-wise monthly domestic passenger traffic statistics. Flight operations to three more routes Hyderabad, Goa, and Tirupati were launched on November 21 by Star Air, a Bengaluru-based regional airline.

Around 2,983 passengers travelled on the Shivamogga-Goa sector and 4,259 passengers travelled on the Shivamogga-Hyderabad sector. On the Shivamogga-Tirupati sector, 3,359 passengers travelled.

According to the Airport Authority of India air traffic data, the airport saw 560 flight movements between August 31, 2023, and January 31, 2024. The Shivamogga airport was built at a cost of ₹449.22 crore and the runway can accommodate A320 aircraft.

Four people sighted at Kodagu-DK border could be naxals, says SP

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Amidst reports of Anti-Naxal Force (ANF) personnel carrying out a combing operation in the forest areas of Kodagu and adjoining Dakshina Kannada district, Superintendent of Kodagu district police K. Ramarajan has confirmed the sighting of four armed individuals at Koojimale near Sampaje, on the border of the two districts.

The four armed individuals, including two men and two women, are suspected to belong to some banned naxal outfit. They visited a shop at Koojimale on March 17 and procured groceries, before disappearing into the adjoining forest region. While the two men and a woman were believed to be around 40-45 years of age, another woman was around 35 years. The suspected naxals, who possessed guns, urged the shopkeeper to extend "support to them as they were fighting for the poor".

Timings
BENGALURU

THURSDAY, MAR. 21	
RISE 06:23	SET 18:30
RISE 15:37	SET 03:53
FRIDAY, MAR. 22	
RISE 06:22	SET 18:30
RISE 16:25	SET 04:33
SATURDAY, MAR. 23	
RISE 06:22	SET 18:31
RISE 17:11	SET 05:09

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	34	24
Mysuru	35	23
Bengaluru	35	22

Bengaluru Today
35°C A dry weather to continue. Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be warm afternoon. Night also will be pleasant.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
35°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be warm and uneasy. Night will be pleasant.

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THE HINDU
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State withdraws condition of minimum number of students for tag of religious minority institution

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Following the guidelines of National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions of Higher Education, the Karnataka Government has withdrawn the criteria of a minimum number of students from a minority community at an education institution to get the tag of Religious Minority Institution. A decision on the criteria was taken in the State Cabinet on March 12, and an order issued on March 16.

The Department of School Education and Literacy had a criteria that at least 25% of the students in these institutions had to be from the minority community that is running the institution. This was even higher – 50% – for Technical Education, Higher Education, and Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Department institutions. Now, these condition have been removed.

According to a copy of the order, this decision was necessary due to a decline in enrollment of minority students at these 'religious minority institutions'. Citing 2011 census data, the order stated that Karnataka has 96.01 lakh people from the minority community, of which 78.94 lakh are Muslims, 11.43 lakh are Christians, 28,000 are Sikhs, 95,000 are Buddhists, 4.40 lakh are Jains, and around 1,000 are from the Parsee community. There isn't enough population of many minority communities to get students as per the minimum requirement prescribed earlier.

However, other criteria for an institution to be declared a religious minority institution will continue.

Your feedback will keep us Cleaner, Sharper and Bolder
Call our toll-free number **1800 102 1878**
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THE HINDU businessline. FRONTLINE SPORTSTAR THE HINDU Young world THE HINDU

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY G20
Corrigendum-3 to E-Tender Notice No. CAO/CN/BNC/EPC/63/2023 Dated : 24-08-2023

Name of the Work	Approx. Value
Construction of New Broad Gauge Line Between Chainage 171.640 & Chainage 142.920 (28.720KM) including Electrical and Signal & Telecommunication works between Bharamasagara (incl) and Chitradurga (excl.) Stations in Tumakuru - Chitradurga - Davangere New Line Project. **(Tender Ref. No : TK-DVG-EPC-02)**	Rs. 380,13,75,567/-

Bid Due Date	
Existing	Revised
01-04-2024 (15:00 Hrs)	15-04-2024 (15:00 Hrs)

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in
Deputy Chief Engineer / Construction / Works
Bengaluru Cantonment
PUB/763/AAS/PRB/SWR/2023-24
South Western Railway - SWR SWRRLY SWRRLY

उ0प्र0 लोक सेवा आयोग
विज्ञप्ति
एतद्द्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि आयोग द्वारा आयोजित आगामी परीक्षाओं में सिक्योरिटी एन्सिलरी सर्विसेज यथा बायोमेट्रिक स्कैन, लाइव सी.सी.टी.वी. तथा फ्रिस्किंग की सेवाऐं प्रदान करने के लिए सेवा प्रदाता एजेन्सी के चयन हेतु जेम पोर्टल पर निम्नलिखित निविदाऐं आमंत्रित की गयी है-

Sr. No.	Bid Number	End Date & Time	Description
01	GEM/2024/B/4802189	09.04.2024 & 18:00 Hrs.	To Provide Security Ancillary Services for 2 Lakh Candidates
02	GEM/2024/B/4802275	09.04.2024 & 18:00 Hrs.	To Provide Security Ancillary Services for 5 Lakh Candidates
03	GEM/2024/B/4802295	09.04.2024 & 18:00 Hrs.	To Provide Security Ancillary Services for 10 Lakh and above Candidates

उपरोक्त आमंत्रित निविदा जेम पोर्टल पर दिनांक 19.03.2024 से उपलब्ध है, इच्छुक निविदादाता निविदा प्रपत्रों का अध्ययन करके प्रतिभाग कर सकते है।
संख्या- 03/डी.पी./मिस/2023-24 **(अशोक कुमार)**
दिनांकः प्रयागराजः 20 मार्च, 2024 **सचिव**

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to bring to the notice of the general public that my client **Mr Saleem S/o Mr Mohammed Jakaria,** Residing at No 58 & 59, 1st Main, 4th Cross, Near Abubakkar Siddique Masjidi, Ganghinagar, K G Halli, Arabic College Post Bangalore 560045. Is intending to purchase the schedule property mentioned hereunder from **1) Mr Saleem Basha** S/o Mr Mohammed Ismail, **2) Mr Akbar Basha** S/o Mohammed Ismail **3) Mr Nayeemulla** S/o Mohammed Ismail All are residing at site No 19, 4th Cross, "GANDHI NAGAR", Kadugondanahalli, Village, BBMP ward No 23 K G Halli, Bangalore If Anyone Person/s, firm/ company / institution / organization or establishment, is/are having any right, title, interest, claim, share, or objections in respect of schedule property hereby required / request to intimate in writing to the undersigned advocate or may contact the undersigned advocate with documentary proof, within **7 days** hereof, and An claim made after the stipulated period, will not be considered, it will be presumed that there is/are no claims and will not be valid, same shall be null & void, such person/s shall be considered as waived and not binding on my Client and my Client will proceed with completion of sale transaction by way of execution Sale Deed in respect of the schedule property in/on the name of my Client.
SCHEDULE PROPERTY
All that piece and parcel of immovable Residential Property i.e., RCC Roofed Ground, First and Second Floor Building Constructed on the SOUTHERN PORTION of the site No 19, Formed out of Assessment No 7, Khata No 7, Situated at 4th Cross, **"GANDHI NAGAR", KADUGONDANAHALLI VILLAGE, (K G Halli), Kasaba Hobli, Bangalore North Taluk, Bangalore,** Now comes under the jurisdiction of BBMP, New BBMP ward No 23, Bangalore, together with all rights appurtenances, whatsoever whether under earth the soil or above surface thereon Measuring East to West 40 Ft & north to South 15 Ft Total measuring 600 Sqft,
East by: Private Property, West by : 20 feet Road, North by: Remaining Portion of same site No 19 &, South by: Site No.20
B. Shubhakar BA LL.B., Advocate
#601, Old Police Station Road, Next to Srinivasa poly clinic, Krishnarajapuram, Bangalore 560036
Mobile: + 91 9448950488,
email : shubhakar14@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
Public are hereby notified that my client proposes to purchase the below mentioned Property from **M/s. VKP PROPERTIES,** a Partnership Firm, No.522, Sampige Road, Bangalore – 560003 who have represented that they are the owners of Schedule Property. Any person/s objecting for the proposed purchase and persons who are having any right, title or interest in the below mentioned property including by way of any agreement or otherwise shall lodge his / her / their objections and/or claims with the undersigned along with supporting documentary evidence within Fifteen (15) days from the date of this publication, failing which it shall be presumed that the title of the aforesaid owner to the Schedule Property is clear, marketable and free from encumbrance/s of any kind whatsoever and no other person has any right, title or interest of any nature whatsoever in the Schedule Property or any part thereof. Further, claims or alleged interest or objections, if any, which are not received within fifteen days from the date of publication of this notice shall be considered to have been consciously waived or abandoned for all intents and purposes and shall no longer be binding.
:SCHEDULE PROPERTY:
All that Commercial property bearing Municipal No.340 (Old No.522), 2nd Main Road, Sampige Road, Municipal Ward No.77 of Dattatreya Temple, Malleshwaram, Bangalore and the Site measuring East to West: 120 Feet and North to South : 30 Feet, in all measuring 3600 Sq. Feet along with a building built thereon consisting of stilt, ground, first and second floors and each floor measuring 2100 Sq. Feet of built up area and in all measuring 8400 Sq.Feet of built up area and property is bounded by :-
East : Conservancy Lane;
West : Sampige Main Road;
North : Property bearing No.349 (Old No.521); and
South : Property bearing No.341 (Old No.523).
Sri. KUSUMA R.MUNIRAJU, Sri. KUSUMA KAUSHIK,
Advocates,
101, "Eden Park",
No.20, Vittal Mallya Road,
Bangalore - 560 001.
Tel: 22217971 & 42000249.
Bangalore Date: 20/3/2024.

FORM NO. 48 [See Rule 99]
IN THE HIGH COURT OF KARNATAKA AT BANGALORE
Original Jurisdiction
In the Matter of the Companies Act, 1956
And
In the Matter of M/s. Jaansi Sampark Consultancy Private Limited
Company Petition No. 47 / 2015
BETWEEN:
Mr. TAM TAM PEDDA GURUVA REDDY, Son of Late Mr. Pedda Guruva Reddy, Residing at No. 1427, 18th Main, 2nd Cross, J. P. Nagar,Bengaluru 560 078. **...Petitioner**
AND:
M/s. Jaansi Sampark Consultancy Private Limited
Having its registered office at No. 187, BEML Layout, Basaveshwaranagar, Bengaluru 560 079 Represented by its director, Smt. N. Jayalakshmi. **...Respondent**
Advertisement of Petition
Notice is hereby given that a petition for a winding-up of **M/s. JAANSI SAMPARK CONSULTANCY PRIVATE LIMITED,** having its registered office at No. 187, BEML Layout, Basaveshwaranagar, Bengaluru-560 079 Represented by its director, Smt. N. Jayalakshmi., was presented to the High Court at Bangalore on 28th February 2015 by Mr. Tam Tam Pedda Guruva Reddy as a creditor, residing at No. 1427, 18th Main, 2nd Cross, J. P. Nagar, Bengaluru 560 078, and the said petition is directed to be heard before the Court on the **25th day of April, 2024.**
Any creditor, contributory or other person desirous of supporting or opposing the making of an order on the said petition should send to the petitioner or his advocate notice of his intention signed by him or his advocate with his name and address, so as to reach the petitioner or his advocate not later than 5 days before the date fixed for hearing of the petition, and appear at the hearing for the purpose in person or by his advocate.
A copy of the petition will be furnished by the undersigned to any creditor or contributory on payment of the prescribed charges for the same.
Any affidavit intended to be used in opposition to the petition should be filed in Courts and a copy served on the petitioner or his advocate, not less than 5 days before the date fixed for hearing.
BY ORDER OF THE HON'BLE COURT
***Sd/-* Assistant Registrar,**
High Court of Karnataka, Bangalore
Address for Service:
Raghuram Cadambi, Advocate
No. 519-520, Prestige Centre Point,
Level 5, No. 7, Cunningham Road,
Bengaluru 560 052. +91 99000 39859. raghuram@cknlaw.in

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to bring to the notice of the general public that my client **Sri N Niranjan Kumar.S/o N Rangappa,** Residing at No 4, 1st floor, 6th Cross, 1st main road, B Chandrappa Nagar, B G Road, Bangalore 560030. Is intending to purchase the schedule property mentioned hereunder from **Sri Asif Ulla Shariff,** S/o Late Shaik Ahmed, & **Sri Khadeer Ulla Shariff,** S/o Asif Ulla Shariff Both are residing at No 799, SJN Apartments, 35th Cross, Jayanagar 4th Block, Bangalore 560011 If Anyone Person/s, firm/ company / institution / organization or establishment, is/are having any right, title, interest, claim, share, or objections in respect of schedule property hereby required / request to intimate in writing to the undersigned advocate or may contact the undersigned advocate with documentary proof, within **7 days** hereof, and An claim made after the stipulated period, will not be considered, it will be presumed that there is/are no claims and will not be valid, same shall be null & void, such person/s shall be considered as waived and not binding on my Client and my Client will proceed with completion of sale transaction by way of execution Sale Deed in respect of the schedule property in/on the name of my Client.
SCHEDULE PROPERTY
All that piece and parcel of Eastern Half Portion in the residential vacant property bearing site 1A, Formed out of the property no 9/1&9/2, old khatha No 9/1 & 9/2, BBMP katha No 9/1 & 9/2/1a, situated at **Nyanappanahalli Village, Begur Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk, Bangalore urban District,** now comes within the limits of BBMPMeasuring East to West 31 Ft & north to South 24 Ft in all measuring 744 Sqft, **East by: Private Property, West by: remaining western Half portion Retained by the vendor, North by: Road &, South by: Site No.1.**
B. Shubhakar BA LL.B., Advocate
#601, Old Police Station Road, Next to Srinivasa poly clinic, Krishnarajapuram, Bangalore 560036
Mobile: + 91 9448950488,
email : shubhakar14@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to notify the general public that we, on behalf of our client, are investigating the ownership rights, title and/or other entitlements of the persons listed in the table below in respect of their respective properties all situated at Mylapura Village, Jadigenahalli Hobli, Hoskote Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District, which is morefully described in the Schedule and hereinafter referred to as "Schedule Properties".
Any person having any right, title or interest in the Schedule Properties must notify the undersigned with documentary proof thereof within **Fifteen (15) days** of this publication, failing which it shall be deemed that no person has any objection to our client purchasing/entering with the development agreements in respect of the Schedule Properties.
SCHEDULE PROPERTIES
The following properties all situated at Mylapura Village, Jadigenahalli Hobli, Hoskote Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District.

Sl. No.	Sy No.	Owners	Extent	Boundaries			
				East	West	North	South
1.	41	Narayanappa s/o Krishnappa	1 Acre 16 Guntas	Kempanna's Property	Munegowda's Property	Mariyappa's Property	Chikkappaya's Property
2.	41	Mariyappa s/o Krishnappa	30 Guntas	Chikanna's Property	Syed Khasim sab's Property	Sigaramma's Property	Narayanappa's Property
3.	43/2	Syed Ajaj s/o Late. Syed Khasmi	10.12 Guntas	Syed Nurulla's Property	Aslam Pasha's Property	Uthanallappa and Sigaramma's Property	Abdhul Sab's Property
4.	43/2	Syed Aslam Pasha s/o Late Syed Ahmed	10.12 Guntas	Syed Ajaj's Property Syed	Govt. Kharab Property	Uthanallapa and Sigaramma's Property	Abdhul Sab's Property
5.	43/2	Fathimabi w/o Syed Khasim sab	10.08 Guntas	Ismail's Property	Syed Ajaj's Property	Uthanallapa and Sigaramma's Property	Abdhul Sab's Property
6.	22/10	Bhavya. J w/o Rajendra. S	20 Guntas	Munishamigowda's Property	Mariyappa's Property	Munishamigowda's Property	Ramaiha's Property
7.	17/5	Manjula w/o M. Jagadish	29 Guntas	Muniyamma and Erappa's Property	Shivanna's Property	Lakshmamma's Property	Munegowda's Property
8.	16/15 (old no.16/3)	Manjula w/o M.Jagadish	19 Guntas	Mariyappa's Property	Sampangi and Betappa's Property	Doddavenkatappa's Property	Hanumanthappa's Property
9.	16/5	Manjula w/o M. Jagadish	2 Guntas	Hanumanthappa's property	Narayanappa's Property	Hanumanthappa's Property	Kere Angala
10.	22/7 (old no. 22/1)	M Jagadish s/o Late Marichikkanna	20 Guntas	Previously Byatappa's Property presently N P Usha's Property	Mariyappa s/o Late K. Munishamappa Property	Munishammigowda's Property	N P Usha and Chandrappa's Property
11.	16/14 (old no.16/8)	Tanushree J D/o M. Jagadish	10 Guntas	Mariyappa's Property	Pillavenkatappa's Property	Papamma's Property	Doddavenkatappa's Property
12.	17/9	Tanushree J D/o M. Jagadish	25 Guntas	Ramesh and Kempegowda Property	Thipanna's Property	Road and Ramesh's Property	Moula and Rajappa's Property
13.	22/9	Bhavya w/o Rajendra M	20 Guntas	Road and Chellappa's Property	Sy.no. 22/8	Sy.no 22/10	Ramesh's Property
14.	23/8 (old no.23/2)	Jagadish s/o Late. Marichikkanna	1 Acre 02 Guntas	Kempanna's Property	Venkataramanappa's Property	Gopala's Property	Chelappa's Property

Mr. Abhijit Atur,
Partner,
M/s Agraa Legal
2nd floor, No. 19, Shivashankar Plaza,
Lalbagh road, Richmond circle, Bangalore - 560 027.
Tel: (O) +91-80-41680004
Email: admin@agraalegal.com
Place: Bengaluru
Dated: 21.03.2024

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ISSN 0971 - 751X

CACHE

New tech: A man uses Apple Vision Pro mixed reality glasses at the Mobile World Congress (MWC), in Barcelona on February 27. AFP

The slow and steady rise of mixed reality technology

Apple went into overkill mode when it asked app developers, building applications for its Vision Pro, to call their apps 'spatial computing apps'. The iPhone maker must be mindful of the technology's rich history in its quest to play a larger role in making mixed reality headsets

John Xavier

When Apple unveiled its Vision Pro in June 2023, it called the device a "revolutionary spatial computer". But most tech enthusiasts preferred calling it a 'mixed reality headset'.

In February, just around the time it launched the product, the iPhone maker went a bit too far when it told developers to not call the Vision Pro "generally as a 'headset' when describing their apps for the device." It also told them to call their apps 'spatial computing apps' – not augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), or mixed reality (MR) apps. Apple's forced use of language is an anti-thesis to its own four-decade-old Super Bowl ad that introduced the Macintosh personal computer to a world hooked to television sets by breaking the idea of 'doublethink' with 'newspeak'. It will serve well for Apple to keep the rich history of reality augmenting technology in mind before it forces the use of specific terms on app developers.

So, what is the history of reality-augmenting technology?

A brief history

In the late 1960s, pioneering computer scientist Ivan Sutherland, along with his student, designed the first-ever head-mounted display (HMD). The device consisted of two cathode ray tubes, mounted on either side of the user's head, enabling the wearer to see a three-dimensional wireframe room. When the user moved, the device would redraw the wireframe room factoring in the user's changed position and perspective. The HMD built by Dr. Sutherland was so heavy that it had to be supported by a large overhead beam. It was jocularly called "The Sword of Damocles" because of its sheer size.

On what such a technology could potentially do in the future, Dr. Sutherland, in his paper, wrote that "displayed material can be made either to hang disembodied in space or to coincide with maps, desktops, walls, or the keys of a typewriter."

But, it took another two decades for HMDs to move in that direction when some large industrial companies began testing the nascent technology to improve productivity on the shop floor and cut training costs. Boeing was one of the first few companies to test and use HMDs to train its shop floor workers.

Testing waters

In 1990, the aircraft manufacturer was looking to cut employee training costs. Making aircraft was – and is even now – a complex task. And most processes are still not automated as they require high levels of dexterity and perceptual awareness.

Back then, the company used diagrams and marking devices to guide workers in the factory to put parts together. Workers had to access a large amount of information, much of it coming from Computer-Aided Design (CAD) systems, to assemble aircraft. When engineering designs were updated to factor in new technical changes, it take more time to pass that information along, delaying the already expensive process. Two Boeing researchers, Thomas Caudell and David Mizell, analysed the situation and developed a goggle system that would let workers access the CAD system directly. They built a headset that augmented the user's field of vision with updated designs.

Like Boeing, throughout the 1990s and 2000s, several organisations tried their hand at making HMD-inspired products. Several military organisations were building and prototyping devices that gave the wearer an additional layer of information. Their goal was to make devices that would either create virtual environments or add layers of information over the user's field of vision with real-time information.

Changing lanes

While those experiments led to a new world of immersive experience technologies, they did not receive as much spotlight as other advances in personal consumer tech in the 2000s.

But, in the early 2010s, when two versions of HMD-based products hit the market, that perception began to change. One was launched by a start-up and another by a tech giant. The former became a success, while the latter failed. The one that did not succeed was Google glass. The search giant's AR glasses were definitely ahead of their time. They provided users an augmented view of the space they were in. But the tech giant's AR glasses were not well received by consumer tech enthusiasts.

The product was criticised for its limited functionality. Some noted that the spectacles violated privacy of people around the user. The search giant re-packaged it for business customers, after which the product took on different shapes and sizes before it was once and for all shelved in 2022.

While Google's AR spectacles suffered, another start-up succeeded. Oculus, founded by Palmer Luckey, built an HMD prototype in the early 2010s that took the gaming world by storm. The start-up was soon bought by Facebook-owner Meta Inc. And its first consumer headset, called Oculus Rift VR, was rebranded and sold as Meta Quest.

Mr. Palmer's idea of building VR devices was focused on making gaming immersive. But the VR company's new top boss, Mark Zuckerberg, had other plans. He was looking for a device that would make his moonshot a reality – the metaverse.

Subsequently, Meta acquired Surreal Vision, a U.K.-based company that was in the business of reconstructing real-time scenes, and integrated it with Oculus VR. The integration brought Oculus's VR headsets 3D capabilities, which enabled it to build products both for VR and AR, in effect creating a mixed reality headset.

Apple's Vision

Apple is now walking into this world with a $3,500 headset. The iPhone maker's headset comes with state-of-the-art hand- and eye-tracking features. It has a bunch of immersive apps, and a set of videos that are built for three-dimensional viewing.

While there are some first-generation bugs, this device offers an upgraded alternative to Meta's top-of-the-line Quest Pro VR headsets, which are retailing at less than half the price of a Vision Pro headset. Despite the expensive price tag, which will definitely make consumers cringe, the Vision Pro clearly sets a new bar in headset technology with its unique operating system, visionOS, that takes the user's gaze as input.

Apple has broken new ground by accomplishing the gaze input tech. So, in some sense, the Vision Pro offers AR, VR, and a little bit more. And that extra bit is making Apple force developers into calling the company's device a spatial computer. According to long-time mixed reality researcher Louis Rosenberg, spatial computing "is a great overarching term for AR, MR, and VR, along with other immersive experiences such as 3D movies and telepresence."

In his medium blog, Dr. Rosenberg recommends companies accept the language of the field.

"Spatial computing is a useful term, but so is augmented reality, mixed reality, and virtual reality, all three of which are part of our history and culture," he concluded.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

"Wife, housewife (A. J. Vani, Secunderabad)."

" 'Wife' is a married woman in relation to her husband. Originally 'wife' meant 'woman.' This sense is preserved in words like 'midwife,' 'fishwife.' A fishwife is a coarse-mannered or noisy woman; a woman who sells fish. The word 'mid' originally meant 'with.' A midwife is one who is with a woman at the time of delivery. 'Mid' has also another meaning 'in the middle of.' A housewife is one who manages a household. She does not work outside her home for a salary. The pronunciation of 'housewife' is the combined pronunciation of 'house' and 'wife.' It is not 'huzif.' The 'u' in 'huzif is pronounced like the 'u' in 'much.' A 'huzif is an inanimate thing. It is a container for holding needles, thread, etc. for needlework. So 'housewife' has one spelling, two different meanings and two different pronunciations. A housewife will be very upset if you call her a 'huzif.' Even when she needles you, you should not call your wife a 'huzif.' A housewife is a wife. A wife need not be a housewife. 'Spouse,' 'companion' and 'consort' are used to refer to a royal spouse. Others must satisfy themselves with their 'spouse' or 'companion' or 'mate' or 'helpmate'. 'Wifely' is the adjective of 'wife.' It means 'of or befitting a good wife.'

It is not wifely to do such a thing.

But there is no corresponding adjective 'husbandly.' Perhaps there is no set behaviour which can be called 'husbandly'. But these days you have 'househusbands' who do household chores as done by housewives. 'Househusbands' manage their households and do not work to earn wages or a salary. If you are unduly fond of your wife, others would say that you are 'uxorious.' A man who is dominated by his wife is a henpecked husband. A wife's scolding of her husband in private is called a curtain lecture, it literally refers to the lecture given by a wife behind the curtains of a bed. This is the origin of the term. A curtain or a bed is not a necessary condition for delivering a 'curtain lecture'. Let us ring down the curtain on wife and housewife."

"You called me?"

"Yes. I would like you to help me in *redundancy elimination*."

"What?"

"A *selective separation*.

"Pardon?"

"*Work force imbalance correction*."

"You want to fire me?"

"Not exactly. I want to *dehire you*."

"You mean I am *deselected*?"

"Yes. You are *decruited, destaffed*."

Some corporations in America use the italicised expressions when they fire their employees.

Published in The Hindu on July 2, 1991.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Nigerian author Chinua Achebe passed away on March 21, 2013. Here is a quiz in honour of one of Africa's best known novelist and poet

K. Abhinaya

QUESTION 1

Speaking about the writer, a former President once said, "There was a writer named Chinua Achebe…in whose company the prison walls fell down." Identify the leader.

QUESTION 2

The writer rejected a national honour conferred by the Nigerian government twice, in 2004 and again in 2011. Name the award.

QUESTION 3

The title of Achebe's popular book was taken from a widely quoted line of a poem — "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold". Who is the poet? Also, identify the poem.

QUESTION 4

Achebe served as an editor for Heinmann's African writer series. One of the key books published by the author as part of the series was *Weep Not, Child*. Who was the writer of the book?

QUESTION 5

Apart from *Things Fall Apart*, which other two books of Achebe formed the African trilogy?

Visual question:
Identify this Nobel Prize-winning author who was one of the Man Booker International judges who awarded Achebe the prize in 2007. AP

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. This individual has served as the Governor of Nagaland and Meghalaya and is now Governor of this State. **Ans: R.N. Ravi; Tamil Nadu**
2. This Governor had previously served the country as the Union Minister of Civil Aviation. **Ans: Arif Mohammad Khan**
3. He is the Governor of one of the northeastern States. **Ans: Kaiwalya Trivikram Parnaik**
4. Acharya Devvrat is the current Governor of Gujarat and has also served as the principal of this kind of educational institution. **Ans: Himachal Pradesh; he was the principal of a Gurukal**
5. Current female Governors. **Ans: Anandiben Patel, Anusuiya Uikey**
6. Identify this Governor and the State and the feat he achieved. **Ans: Kambhampati Hari Babu, Governor of Mizoram. He became the first person from divided Andhra Pradesh and the first Telugu person to serve as Governor of Mizoram in northeast India**
Early Birds: Raju Gopal| K. N. Viswanathan| Jyot Prakash Gulati| Rajmohan. V| Varghese Joseph
Correction: In yesterday's article, 'Decoding electoral bonds data', in Table 3 it was mentioned that Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd was raided by the IT department in November 2023. No such raid happened. It was mistakenly added to the list. The error is regretted.

Word of the day

Inveigle:
influence or urge by gentle urging, caressing, or flattering

Synonyms: sweet-talk, blarney, palaver, cajole, coax, wheedle

Usage: He was speechless when he found out that the new hire was able to inveigle his way into the new club.

Pronunciation: bit.ly/inveiglepro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ɪnˈveɪg|/, /-ˈviː-/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

Provide robust videoconference system in all prisons, says HC

Court directs govt. to give headphones to ensure that there is no breach of privacy of inmates during their interaction with family and advocates

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka has directed the State government to provide a vibrant videoconference facility in all prisons for interaction of jail inmates with their advocates as well as the family members, and make available headphones for all of them during such virtual meets so that there is no breach of privacy during interaction.

Justice M. Nagaprasanna passed the order while disposing of a petition filed by Abdul Basheer and 10 other persons, who are accused in the case of murder of BJP Yuva Morcha member Praveen Nettaru, who was killed on July 26, 2022, in Bellare village of Sullia taluk in Dakshina Kannada district.

Rejected

The court rejected the plea of the petitioners to transfer them back to Bengaluru central prison from different prisons where they are lodged at present. They were moved to different prisons from Bengaluru prison for security reasons after one of the accused turned approver before retracting it.

They said that there is a threat to their life in other prison following an attack on a prison in Belagavi prison. However, the government clarified to the court that none of the accused in the present case were attacked in the prison and the incident relates to a few other prisoners.

"The only intention of the petitioners to come to Bengaluru and to be together is to hatch another conspiracy for illegal activities," the government had told the court.

Meanwhile, it was pointed by the advocate for the petitioners that there is no proper videoconference facility in prisons for effectively interacting with their advocates. Though videoconference facility is available in some prison, it does not work properly, and even if it works, there is no privacy for interaction with the advocates. Taking note of absence of proper videoconference facility, the court directed that a robust videoconference facility with headphones should be provided in all prisons for effective interaction of inmates with their advocates and family members as per the law. The court also said that authorities should ensure that videoconference system works without glitches in those prisons in which the system already exists.

Veena Kashappanavar upset following rumours about denial of ticket

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Congress workers and Veena's supporters stage protest against State Congress leaders

Congress ticket aspirant Veena Kashappanavar, wife of Congress MLA Vijayananda Kashappanavar, shed tears in front of media persons in New Delhi following rumours that she had been denied the ticket to contest the Lok Sabha election from Bagalkot constituency.

Sources in the party said a decision was taken to field Agricultural Marketing and Sugar Minister Shivanand Patil's daughter Samyukta Patil against BJP's P.C. Gaddigoudar in Bagalkot.

As soon as the rumours began to spread, party workers and Ms. Kashappanavar's supporters staged a protest holding "go back" placards in front of the party office in Bagalkot. They burnt tyres and shouted slogans against State Congress leaders.

Ms. Samyukta Patil hails from the neighbouring Vijayapura district.

Women workers also rushed to the Chief Minister's residence in Bengaluru and opposed giving ticket to the Ministers' daughter.

Shedding tears in front of media cameras in the national capital, Ms. Kashappanavar said, "The party has done injustice to women workers".

Ms. Kashappanavar, a former Zilla Panchayat president, said she toured the whole district during the last five years and ensured the victory of party candidates in five of the eight Assembly constituencies.

She secured close to five lakh votes in the 2019 parliamentary elections and lost to the BJP candidate by a margin of 1.6 lakh votes.

Text & Context and Science

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carries explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (March 21, Thursday), the following articles are available:

- The resurgence of mass kidnappings in Nigeria **bit.ly/nigeriakidnappstc**
- Right whales may never breed after run-ins with fishing gear **bit.ly/whalesbreeding**

You can use your smartphone's inbuilt features to access these articles. If it's an Android phone, use Google Lens to read and tap the url to access an article. If it's an iPhone, use Live Text on camera to do the same.

CID files chargesheet in Udupi voyeurism incident

The Hindu Bureau
MANGALURU

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has filed chargesheet in connection with the voyeurism incident reported in a paramedical college in Udupi last year.

Two volumes

The chargesheet in two volumes was submitted by investigation officer and CID Deputy Superintendent of Police Anju Mala before Principal Civil Judge and JMFC Deepa on Tuesday. On June 18, 2023, three students of Netrajyoti Paramedical College were accused of recording their classmate in the washroom on their mobile phone.

On June 18, 2023, three students of a paramedical college were accused of recording their classmate in the washroom

The Malpe police registered a *suo motu* case against the three students.

The BJP and Vishwa Hindu Parishad carried out a protest in front of the college and demanded a high-level inquiry into the incident. The case was first investigated by Malpe inspector Manjunath Gowda and then by Kundapur Deputy Superintendent K.U. Belliyappa. It was on August 7, 2023 that the State government asked the CID to conduct the further investigation.

APPOINTMENT

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Khaja Education Society's

BI BI RAZA DEGREE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

(Arts & Science) A Religious Minority Aided Institution

Rauza-e-Buzurg, Kalaburagi – 585 104 (College Code: 2225)

No. KES/BBRDC/APT/2023-24 Dated: 20/03/2024

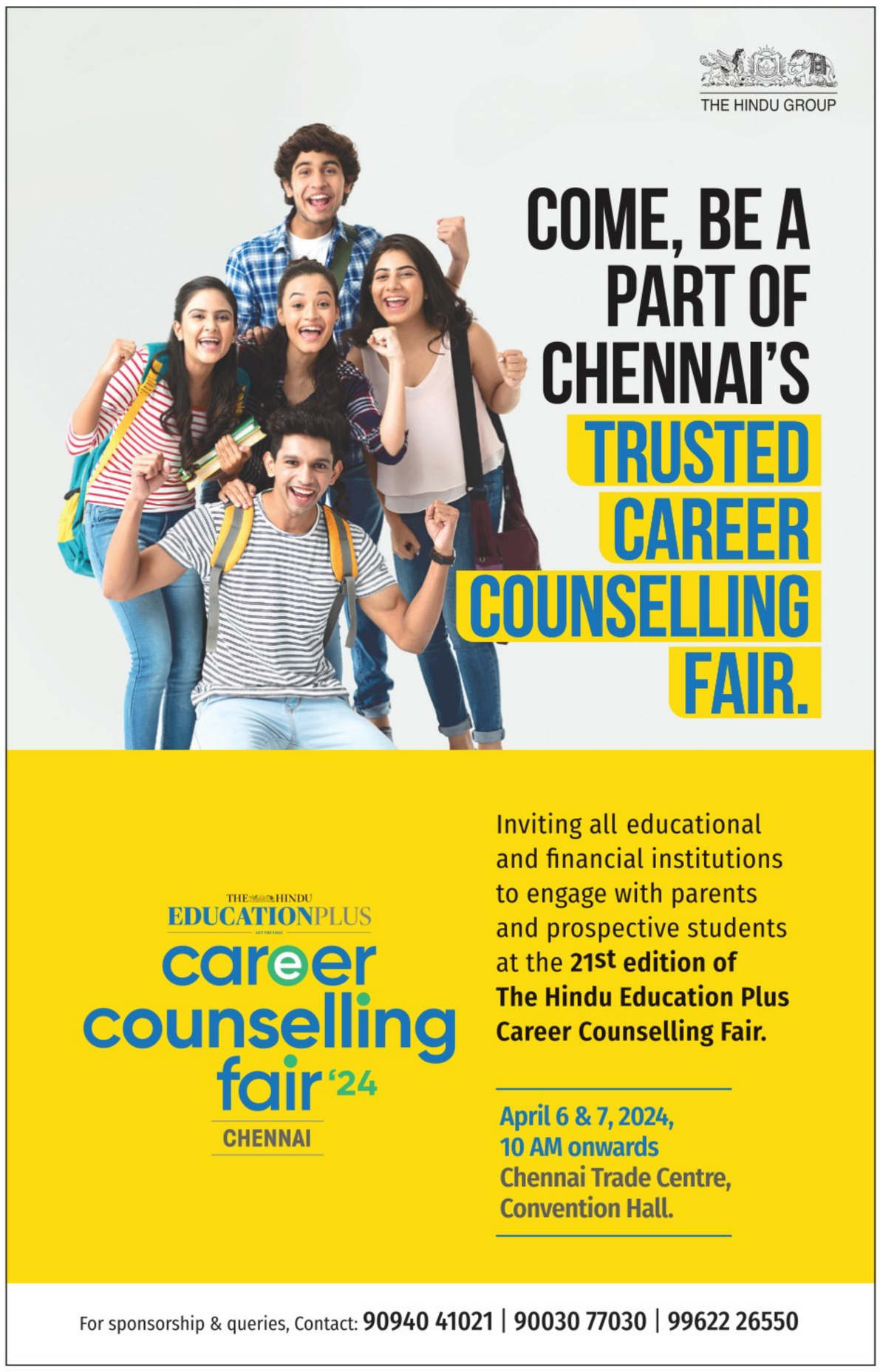
NOTIFICATION

Applications are invited for the post of "Assistant Professor" in Khaja Education Society Kalaburagi's Bi Bi Raza Degree College for women, Kalaburagi – 585 104 for the below mentioned posts as per the letters issued by the Commissioner of Collegiate Education, Bangaluru, vide No.(1)DCE/101/HK/R/2016-17/NV-2/(2)DCE/162/HK/LOC/VPF/GD/2022-23/NV-2/dated 14/03/2024 respectively and as per the letter issued by the Joint Director of Collegiate Education, Regional Office,Kalaburagi,videNo.(1)_DCE/PRAKKA/1204/WL/5/2023-24/3573 & (2)DCE/PRAKKA/1204/WL/5/2023-24/3575 dated 15/03/2024 respectively. The details are as follows:

S.No.	Subject	No. of Post	Group	Reservation
1	History	01	KKR (371-J)	Reservation system not applicable (Minority institution)
2	Botany	01	KKR (371-J)	
3	Physical Education Director	01	Non KKR	

Educational qualification:
(a) Candidates must hold Master Degree in the concerned subject with minimum 55% marks (50% for SC/ST) from any recognized University of India. **(b)** Candidates should have qualified in the NET/SLET ()KSET) **(c)** Candidates with the Ph.D. degree with course work are exempted from NET.SLET. **(d)** Candidates possessing the Ph.D. degree or registered for Ph.D. degree prior to 11-07-2009 will be subjected to fulfilling the conditions laid down in the UGC notification dated 04/05/2016 **(e)** M. Phil qualification will not be considered.
Age limit: The maximum limit of the age to apply for the post as per the Appointment Regulation vide No. ED/49/UPC/2018 dated 20/06/2018, SC/ST/Cat-I – 45 years, other Backward Group (Cat-IIA, IIB, IIIA,IIIB) – 43 years and General Group – 40 years. Age relaxation given as per the Govt. Order No. ED/87/UPC/2016 dated 13/12/2018, to those who served as Full Time Lecturers in the aided/Govt. Degree colleges for the actual period of service or 5 years whichever is less.
Selection Procedure: As per UGC guidelines & Rules of Govt. of Karnataka. Pay scale: As per the norms of UGC and Govt. of Karnataka.
Other conditions: **(1)** Eligible candidates should submit their Bio-data alongwith relevant documents (from SSLC to higher qualification) duly attested, within 21 days from the date of paper notification to the Secretary General, Khaja Education Society, KBN Girls Hostel Campus, Rauza-e-Buzurg, Kalaburagi–585104. **(2)** On the envelop superscribing as "Application for the post of _____" **(3)** Candidates who are applying for History & Botany must enclose the valid "Kalyana Karnataka Certificate (371-J) **(4)** A copy of the application should also be submitted to the Joint Director of Collegiate Education, Regional Office, Kalaburagi within the due date. **(5)** Candidates working in Aided institution or Govt. College should submit the NOC from the concerned principal. **(6)** Incomplete OR applications submitted after the due date will be rejected. **(7)** Appointment order will be issued after the approval of Commissioner, Collegiate Education, Bangaluru. **(8)** Application fees of Rs. 2000/- should pay through Demand Draft from the Nationalized Bank in favour of Secretary General, Khaja Education Society Kalaburagi. (Non-refundable) **(9)** The right of approval or rejection will retain by the Government or Department of Collegiate Education, candidates will not claim any right just by submitting the application or attending the interview. **(10)** The date of interview will be intimated. **(11)** No. TA & DA will be paid for interview.

Sd/- SECRETARY GENERAL.



Telling opinion apart from paid content on social media a challenge, says EC

'Monitoring influencer activities on social media is a complex task due to the sheer volume of content and the difficulty in distinguishing between opinions and paid promotional content'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

To ensure accountability in political messaging on social media platforms during polls, the Election Commission will keep a close watch on social media influencers and those who indulge in providing indirect publicity to political parties and candidates.

Top officials from the Election Commission on Wednesday asserted that provisions of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), will also apply to campaigning through the Internet and social media.

"Monitoring and effectively regulating all influencer activities on social media is a complex and challenging task due to the sheer volume of content and the difficulty in distinguishing between genuine opinions and paid promotional content. However, all social media influencers in Karnataka are under our radar," said Suryasen A.V., Special Officer (Media and IT), in Karnataka. "We have

A private agency has been roped in to prepare a list of social media influencers and keep a watch on their social media activity during the poll season in Karnataka. GETTY IMAGES/AFP

a district-wise list of around 300 such influencers and are keeping a close watch on their accounts," he told *The Hindu* on the sidelines of a workshop on media's role in the electoral process. The workshop was organised by the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer in Karnataka and the Department of Information and Public Relations.

Private agency

Venkatesh Kumar R., Additional Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), said a private agency had been roped in to prepare the list of social media influencers and keep a watch on their social media activity. "All political advertisements on social media will have to be pre-certified and expenditure on campaigning through the Internet will have to be reported. Although the Media Certification and Monitoring Committees (MCMC) track the print and the electronic media, keeping a watch on social media is challenging," he said.

"Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach involving collaboration with social media platforms and public awareness campaigns to promote transparency and accountability among influencers. If any of them are found to be violating the rules, action can be initiated under Section 171 H of the IPC," he said.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has issued detailed guidelines for political advertisements on such platforms that include obtaining certification for content before putting them in the public domain. It is mandatory for political parties and individual candidates to keep details of expenditure incurred on advertisements on social media and the expenses will be accounted for in the total election expenditure incurred by the candidates. Besides, all social networking sites have also been asked to maintain expenditure incurred by the political parties and individual candidates on social media advertisements, he said.

Activists complain to EC, police against BJP MPs for 'hate speech'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Alleging that BJP MP Tejasvi Surya's "inflammatory remarks" regarding a recent controversy in Nagarthpet in Bengaluru are exacerbating communal tensions during the Lok Sabha elections, two groups of activists have complained to the Election Commission demanding immediate action against him.

Tension had prevailed in the area on Tuesday as the BJP leaders, including Mr. Surya, staged a protest against the assault on a trader by a group of youth for allegedly playing 'Hanuman Chalisa' over a loudspeaker in his shop during *azaan* (Islamic call for prayer).

In their complaint, activists from Campaign Against Hate Speech and Jagrutha Nagarikaru Karnataka have stated that the MP has violated Section 123(a) of Representation of People Act, Model Code of Conduct and Sections 153(a), 295(a) 505(2) by making the inflammatory remarks. "His statements targeting the Muslim community and attempting to create hatred between the Hindu and Muslim community on March 18 on "X" social media platform (formerly Twitter) have wide reaching consequences on voters, communal harmony, and the elections as he commands a following of 1.3 million persons," stated the complaint.

A file photo of Tejasvi Surya, MP, during a protest at Nagarthpet in Bengaluru.

"Subsequently, he has attempted to stoke communal hatred by calling for Hanuman Chalisa to be recited everywhere," said Vinay Sreenivasa from Campaign Against Hate Speech. Vimala K.S. from Jagrutha Nagarikaru Karnataka, said it is evident that the MP is "attempting to create hatred between the Hindu and Muslim communities", by calling them "Jihadis" and disrupting communal harmony in the run-up to the elections.

Police complaint

Mr. Sreenivasa said a complaint has also been filed with the Halasur Gate police regarding the "unlawful rally" held on Tuesday under the leadership of Mr. Surya and two other MPs - Shobha Karandlaje and P.C. Mohan.

"It may also be noted that Ms. Karandlaje also made a statement alleging that people from Tamil Nadu were involved in The Rameshwaram Cafe blast... Such statements are not only factually wrong and incendiary but also an explicit call for violence against the Muslim community," the plaint stated.

"To protect these core values of our Constitution, and to ensure that religious communities are not subjected to hate speech and denial of citizenship, the ECI must ensure immediately that communal harmony during the election period is not vitiated by such candidates and political parties," the complaint added.

Nagarthpet incident blown out of proportion: Local BJP MLA

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

BJP MLA for Chikpete Uday Garudachar has said the recent incident at Nagarthpet here, over which all three BJP Lok Sabha election candidates from Bengaluru held a protest on Tuesday, "was blown out of proportion ahead of elections".

"As far as my information goes, the mobile sales and services shopkeeper Mukhesh was not assaulted over playing Hanuman Chalisa. I have reliable information as I am the local MLA. There was no need to exaggerate this issue," he told mediapersons on Wednesday.

Committed to secularism

Reiterating his commitment to secularism, Mr. Gaurdachar said he believes that all communities have to live in harmony and he had communicated the same to BJP leaders.

Second list of BJP candidates for State expected tomorrow: Yediyurappa

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Veteran BJP leader B.S. Yediyurappa, who on Tuesday night held consultations with party Central leaders Amit Shah and J.P. Nadda in Delhi about the political situation in the party State unit, indicated that a clear picture would emerge on names of candidates for the remaining seats in Karnataka and be announced on Friday, March 22.

Speaking to mediapersons in Delhi on Wednesday, the former Chief Minister said all issues including the names of probable candidates for the remaining Seats in the

B.S. Yediyurappa

state as well as rebellion by a few leaders had been discussed the meeting with party Central leaders.

On JD(S)

Being cautious on questions related to the number of seats being given to the coalition partner JD(S), he only said that all those things would be known on Friday. At the same time, he maintained that the JD (S) leaders would be convinced by the decision to be taken by the BJP high command. Mr. Yediyurappa hinted that the JD(S) may get three Lok Sabha seats by saying that the BJP, which has already announced names of candidates for 20 of the total 28 Lok Sabha seats, would announce the names of candidates for the remaining five seats on Friday.

Joint campaign

He said the BJP State unit would embark upon a joint campaign tour of the State along with JD(S) leaders H. D. Deve Gowda and H. D. Kumaraswamy within two days after announcement of names of candidates for all the Lok Sabha seats in the State.

Referring to the speculation about the Congress trying to woo disgruntled BJP leader D.V. Sadananda Gowda, who is upset over missing out on the party ticket for Lok Sabha polls, Mr. Yediyurappa said the Congress had reached a "pathetic situation" where it did not even have candidates for various Lok Sabha seats. "It is a shameless thing that the Congress is trying to woo candidates from the BJP," he said.

The veteran leader said that he would speak to disappointed ticket aspirants like J.C. Madhuswamy and Karadi Sanganna to assuage their hurt feelings.

Eshwarappa intensifies attack; says Vijayendra will have to quit after LS poll results

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU/SHIVAMOGGA

BJP senior leader K.S. Eshwarappa, who has turned rebel by deciding to contest against party candidate and B.S. Yediyurappa's son B.Y. Raghavendra for the Shivamogga Lok Sabha seat, on Wednesday upped the ante by remarking that Mr. Yediyurappa's other son and BJP State president B.Y. Vijayendra would have to step down after the announcement of Lok Sabha poll results in June.

Addressing a gathering of his supporters in Shivamogga, Mr. Eshwarappa asserted that there was no question of him withdrawing from the poll contest and expressed confidence that he would emerge victorious

Reacting sharply to this, Mr. Yediyurappa told mediapersons in Delhi that he would not respond to such irresponsible remarks. "People themselves will respond to it. Because, they know the work done by Mr. Vijayendra after he took over as the party State president," he said.

K.S. Eshwarappa

"Mr. Eshwarappa is making such allegations against me just because his son missed out on party ticket. But such decisions are not unilateral as it is the Centre which takes the final call. I am sure that he will understand the situation within two to three days and remain with us," he said.

Meanwhile, former Minister Goolihatti Shekhar, who met Mr. Eshwarppa, has extended his support to his (Eshwarappa's) contest. Speaking to presspersons, he said Mr. Eshwarappa's contribution to building the party was significant. "He is contesting to cleanse the party. I will campaign for him in the election," he said.

FKCCI lists demands

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A group of leaders of BJP had an interactive session with Ramesh Chandra Lahoti, president, the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI) and other office-bearers of the trade body on Wednesday.

The meeting aimed to gather pre-poll suggestions and recommendations from trade and industry representatives in the city to be included in the party's Sankalpa Patra (Manifesto).

Mr. Lahoti suggested that Ease of Doing Business was required to be implemented both in letter and spirit as the same is required to be implemented for the development, and growth of the trade and industry. "Not only that, several tax reforms are very much required for the growth of trade and business. 43b (h) and 206H and 194q are some of the examples," he said.

FKCCI's recommendations also included introduction of a Small Factories Bill, exit policy for MSMEs, rationalisation of GST slabs, the inclusion of petrol/diesel into GST law, Ayushman Bharat scheme for all citizens, one nation one policy for labour laws, national river policy to address foods and drought situations, one nation one power grid and affordable power tariff for SME, etc. Suggestions were submitted in a drop box provided.

Villagers in Tirthahalli taluk put up banners restricting entry of politicians

The Hindu Bureau
SHIVAMOGGA

Residents of several villages in Tirthahalli taluk, who have been opposing the multi-crore multi-village drinking water supply scheme, have put up banners restricting the entry of politicians seeking votes to their villages.

The residents of Kodlu, Savali, Heggodu, Balekodlu and other villages in the taluk have been opposing the multi-village water supply scheme, being implemented under the Jal Jeevan Mission, at a cost of ₹344 crore.

They allege that the project, approved in 2022, was only to benefit the contractor and the politicians. The project has been designed to lift water from Bheemeshwara Sangama, where rivers Malathi and Tunga join, and supply the same to 1,616 habitations in 36 gram panchayats.

Multiple protests

They have been staging protests opposing the

Residents of some villages in Tirthahalli taluk are unhappy with politicians for not supporting their protest against the multi-crore multi-village water supply scheme being implemented under the Jal Jeevan Mission. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

scheme for the last six months, stating that the taluk did not require such a project.

As most of the villages are located on the banks of rivers, the scheme is unnecessary, the villagers say.

The villagers, disappointed over politicians' disregard for their protest, put up banners prohibiting the entry of politicians. A banner placed at Heggodu states that the villagers, opposing the multi-village water scheme, prohibit the entry of politicians. If they enter, they would face protests from the villagers. Similar banners have been placed in many villages.

'No violation'

However, the taluk administration has intervened in the issue, and they have ordered the removal of the banners. The officials of gram panchayats have been asked to remove them. The villagers have opposed the removal of the banners.

"We are not violating the Model Code of Conduct, as the posters are not in support of any politician or party," said Abhilash, one of the protesters.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Our client intends to buy the Schedule Property from its owner, **Mrs. Sharmeen Yunus,** W/o. Mr. Yunus Zia ("Owner"). The Owner represents and warrants that she is the absolute owner of the Schedule Property and that she has not conveyed nor has entered into any agreement for sale or arrangement with any person(s) for sale/transfer of the Schedule Property. The Owner further represents and warrants that she has not encumbered, mortgaged or created any lien on, the Schedule Property in any manner, and apart from the Owner, there are no other person/s, firm or company having any sort of right, title or claim over the Schedule Property. Any person/s having objections or claims shall lodge their objection/claim with documentary evidence **within seven (07) days** from the date of this Notice with the undersigned, failing which, our client shall proceed with the above-mentioned transaction, deeming that apart from the aforesaid Owner, no one else has/have any manner of right or claim or interest whatsoever over the Schedule Property.

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No. RO KA-32.0011.0/7/2024-CON-RO KA Date: 20.03.2024
ई-निविदा सूचना / e-Tender Notice

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महाप्रबंधक (कर्नाटक)
GENERAL MANAGER (Karnataka)

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

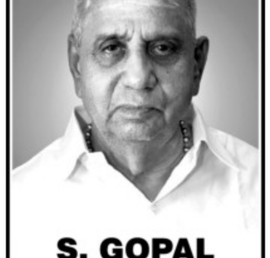
DEATH

SAD DEMISE

Mrs. LAKSHMI SATHYANARAYANAN
Retd. SBI, Chennai
Passed away peacefully on 16.03.2024 Subham on 28.03.2024 at her residence, 10/23 West Vanniar Street, 3G Maran Enclave, West KK Nagar, Chennai - 600078.
Grieved by her sons
Vasanth & Jayanth (9677203243)
Dearly missed by her Family & Friends

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

15th ANNIVERSARY



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Bengaluru start-up makes surgical navigation accessible to smaller towns

HRS Navigation offers computer-assisted surgery solutions for image-guided surgeries at rates that are around 50% lesser than existing market rates, making it accessible for a larger Indian market

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

In India, the difference between the health infrastructure in metros and smaller towns is stark, and it is not uncommon for people to travel to big cities for complex surgical procedures and better medical treatments.

Image-guided surgeries (IGS) used for accessing deep tumours is one such procedure rarely performed in hospitals in smaller towns, one of the main reasons being the high equipment cost that varies from ₹1.5 to 3 crore making it unaffordable for smaller hospitals.

But what if the technology could be tweaked to make it more affordable and thereby accessible to the larger Indian market?

This was the thought that prompted Arpit Paliwal to start HRS Navigation, a Bengaluru-based health-tech start-up that attempts to bridge the gap by coming up with a surgery navigation equipment designed for Indian circumstances, particularly considering hospitals in smaller towns and rural areas.

Founded in 2015, the start-up offers computer-assisted surgery solutions for image-guided surgeries at rates that are around 50% lesser than existing market rates. It claims to be the first domestic manufacturer of navigation systems for procedures such as neuro, ENT and spine surgeries.

HRS Navigation's easyNav surgical navigation system in use at an operation theatre.

Surgical navigation equipment designed by HRS Navigation.

Arpit Paliwal

Starting up

During his stint at Stryker, a global med-tech company, Paliwal noticed that most med-tech companies are focused on the Western Market and not doing much to suit their product for the Indian market. While Europe is the pioneer in the IGS technology, Paliwal felt there was a big need for such technologies in India too.

"During my tenure at Stryker, I have been to tier-2 and tier-3 cities in India.

The infrastructure there is very different and healthcare facilities are not up to the mark. But more than 75% of the Indian population lives in these smaller towns. Many of them can't afford to go to big hospitals and get these expensive surgeries done. I myself have seen people telling their doctors that they'd need to sell their houses to get a surgery done," says Paliwal.

Seeing this gap in the existing infrastructure, he started HRS Navigation in 2015 by making use of his exposure to R&D, clinical medicine, marketing, and sales.

Image Guided Surgeries

In image Guided Surgeries a computer-assisted navigation system is used to make the smallest possible incisions instead of operating over a large area. This is usually done for complex surgeries like scoliosis, brain tumour and so on where the error margin is very low.

For example, if a brain tumour is to be surgically removed, an MRI or CT scan of the brain is fed into the computer monitors. Using a tracking instrument and a camera, the location of the tumour seen in the scan report is matched to that on the brain. This helps the surgeon to precisely understand where to make an incision to access the tumour in the shortest and safest way.

According to Paliwal, what sets his start-up different is that its solution doesn't require consumables or single-use components unlike in the case of equipment offered by others.

According to Dr. Krishnaswamy, usage of navigation systems reduces overall expenses for the patient

Typically, for image guided surgeries consumables like glions and batteries need to be changed after each surgery. Due to the high costs involved some hospitals continue to use it for a few more surgeries, but that would impact the precision, Paliwal notes.

Consumable-less technology

HRS, on the other hand, has designed its system based on optical pattern recognition technology which uses a stereoscopic vision camera to detect and track specially marked objects. This eliminates the need for consumables.

"If you zoom into the image of a Chandrayaan lander, you can see a black-and-white pattern that looks like a chessboard. This is used for tracking. We are using similar technology. They are using those technology in high precision space navigation, we are using similar technology to navigate body space," explains Paliwal.

According to him, the initial costs of HRS's system come to about ₹50-90 lakhs, around 50% cheaper than the existing equipment in the market.

"There are no recurrent costs apart from the annual maintenance fee. So, the cost benefit over the long term is huge. This enables the hospitals to offer the surgeries at cheaper rates or for free for financially poor patients."

At the Sri Ramachandra Medical College in Chennai, HRS's system was installed a few months back.

Doctor-certified

Dr. Visvanathan Krishnaswamy, senior consultant neurosurgeon at the hospital, says surgeries have become more precise since.

"I have worked in hospitals abroad as well as in India and some of them had navigation systems. Sometimes, when you tell your patient that the surgery cost will go up since you'd be using a fancy system bought for a few crores, they may not appreciate it. With HRS's system, you are getting the best of both worlds. It does its job and is cost-effective too," he says.

According to Dr. Krishnaswamy, usage of navigation systems reduces overall expenses for the patient. "Without a navigation system, for surgeries like brain tumour, we would be doing a much bigger opening, the operating time will be longer, and the patient would be staying in the hospital longer as well. With this, we can operate with a small straight incision, a smaller precise craniotomy.

The patient is in and out of the hospital faster this way. This is the case with any navigation system, but for others the payback period will be longer due to the high cost of the equipment, for us it's much shorter."

Eyes on the globe

At the office of HRS systems in Rajaji Nagar is a map of India with star-shaped stickers on it. The stars indicate the systems sold in different geographies. A couple of stars are seen outside India in the region where Nepal is located.

"Interestingly those were some of our first sales," says Paliwal, who now plans to step on his international expansion plans.

As per multiple studies, image-guided surgery systems is looking at a global market of around $17 billion by 2032-22. HRS has so far sold 105 systems out of which 100 have been installed. Around 80% of them have been in smaller towns of India.

"We want to expand globally. We already have installations outside India, but we have not been very aggressive since expansion outside the country also requires service and support," says Paliwal.

HRS, which claims a 70% year-on-year growth, is also looking at robotics in healthcare. "Making it affordable and accessible will always be the thought process guiding us," Paliwal notes.

Pocket FM raises $103 million in Series D funding

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Pocket FM, an audio entertainment platform, recently announced that it has raised $103 million in Series D funding. The round was led by Lightspeed with participation from Stepstone Group.

According to the release, the new funding will strengthen Pocket FM's push into the U.S. market and also support global expansion as the company plans to expand into Europe and LATAM markets in 2024.

The company announced its U.S. entry in Q4 of 2022 and its revenue has surpassed $100 million ARR in the U.S. market. U.S. audiences are the most engaged on the platform globally, spending over 135 minutes daily.

Pocket FM has put up an AI-led strategy for automation, content curation, production, and distribution. The company plans to leverage generative AI to scale its entertainment content offerings and build AI-powered personalized recommendations that enhance the overall user experience.

Interest to work with start-ups dips among students, reveals Unstop survey

It also showed a glaring gap between the offers received by male and female students from Arts and Science colleges

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

An annual report released by Unstop, a talent discovery, engagement and hiring platform for students and graduates, revealed a declining interest among college and university students in working for start-ups.

The annual Unstop Talent Report 2024, based on responses from over 11,000 students, university partners, and human resources practitioners across the country, showed a drop from the previous year to 10% of students interested in working for start-ups.

With active layoffs happening in the job sector, three out of five students prioritised job security over pay hikes, a stark shift in mindset. For most of them, in-hand salary remained the most valuable salary component, followed by perks and benefits.

Around 45% of B-school students preferred working at established and legacy firms, while 52% of engineering students expressed openness to working with any company.

The annual Unstop Talent Report 2024 was based on responses from over 11,000 students, university partners, and human resources practitioners across the country. GETTY IMAGES

The gender gap

As per the report, in engineering colleges, most men and women received the same average offer, but there was a stark difference among Arts and Science students. If most of the men received an offer of INR 6-10 LPA, most women received an offer of INR 2-5 LPA - half of the offer bagged by male students. In B-School, 55% of men received an offer of over INR 16 LPA, but only 45% of women received an offer above INR 16 LPA.

Skill over experience and academics

The report which shared insights and trends about the hiring and talent scenario in India also showed that marketing was the top preferred domain for B-school students, while Finance and Analytics topped the list for Arts and Science students. Additional insights were also gathered during the survey through conversations with HR leaders.

According to the report, only 7% of Indian colleges achieve full campus placement., however, almost 81% of HR professionals said their organisations are actively hiring.

Around 88% of HR practitioners expressed a strong preference for skill-based hiring, prioritising candidates' abilities over other factors such as past experience, academics, references, internships, and projects.

While 91% of students believed their college curricula offered an adequate level of preparedness for a job, 66% of recruiters and 42% of university partners felt the skill gap and lack of preparation, respectively, were major challenges in campus recruitment.

Talent landscape of India

Ankit Aggarwal, Founder and CEO of Unstop, said, "The Unstop Talent Report 2024 provides a comprehensive snapshot of the talent landscape in India, offering valuable insights for both employers and job seekers. By highlighting the preferences and concerns of students and HR professionals, we aim to bridge the gap between talent supply and demand, enabling more informed decision-making and fostering a more efficient and effective hiring process."

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 21, 1974

Misuse of Cement: Charge Against Karnataka Minister

Bangalore, March 20: A charge by a Socialist member that there was large scale misappropriation of cement and steel intended for two Harijan hostels under construction in Bangalore and that the materials had been diverted for construction of the house of public works Minister, Mr. H.M. Channabasappa created a tense situation in Karnataka Assembly to-day and the protracted discussion ended in the Minister offering to get an enquiry done into the allegation by the State Vigilance Commissioner. Mr. Channabasappa assured the Opposition, which expressed dissatisfaction with the course adopted by the Government, that the Government would take all steps to see that evidence was not tampered with.

MLC Criticises Tardy Progress of Work on Kabini Project

Bangalore, March 20: The tardy progress of work on the Kabini project was criticised by Mr. M.C. Basappa (Congress O) in the Legislative Council to-day.

Speaking on the State budget for 1974-75, he said that the funds allocated for major irrigation projects, especially the Kabini and Upper Krishna projects, were inadequate. Mr. Basappa said that the Kabini project, which was begun 14 years ago, would not be completed in the next 10 years, if work progressed at the present rate. As against the Rs. 4.8 crores allocated last year, only Rs. 2.6 crores had been spent. The Government should first complete all the channels and aqueducts of the projects.

BIAF: Celebrating Kumar Gandharva's Karnataka connection

The Bengaluru International Arts Festival is back in the city this weekend

Ruth Dhanaraj

Celebrating harmony though Art (From left) Scenes from *Pratibodhana* and *Silapadhikaram*, Ronu Majumdar, Abhishek Raghuram and Suma Sudhindra (below). SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

This year, the Bengaluru International Arts Festival (BIAF) is celebrating their 16th edition spread over two weekends, from March 22 to 30. According to Veena Murthy Vijay, director of BIAF, the festival this year focuses on celebrating the birth centenary of classical singer Pandit Kumar Gandharva.

"Though he spent the greater part of his life in Madhya Pradesh, Kumar Gandharva was born in Dharwad and we are celebrating his Karnataka connection," says Veena, adding, "We have curated the festival around that aspect, which is why there will be quite a few Hindustani concerts based on his compositions at this edition of BIAF."

Ever since its inception, the theme of BIAF has been, "celebrating harmony through art, in a bid to build bridges between nations and peoples," says Veena.

Suma Sudhindra, also a director at BIAF, wholeheartedly concurs, mentioning how international artistes from Netherlands, Germany, Italy and England had participated in a BIAF event in January this year.

Suma who will be seen presenting a jugalbandhi on the opening day with flautist Ronu Majumdar, says, "This year too, a tree-planting ceremony with college students will be part of our festivities." This initiative to save the environment will see the participation of students from Sindhi College in Kempapura, MLA College in Malleshwaram and the NCC cadets from BHC College.

"A patch of land at Marasarahalli has slowly turn into a wooded area, as result of our efforts of planting trees there for the past 15 years as part of our Go Green Bangalore campaign," adds Veena.

According to Veena, a segment titled *Marma*, based on different genres of bhakti music from all over India will be presented at the festival, which will also see a concert performance by vocalist Bhuvanesh Komkali, Pandit Gandharva's grandson.

"This year, I will be presenting the classic love story *Silapadhikaram*, as a dance drama that explores the love triangle between Kannagi, Kovalan and Madhavi. This piece will explore love, passion, adultery, loyalty, revenge and power – human emotions which come into relationships and how they play a role in the story of our lives," says Veena.

Bharatnatyam artiste Rama Vaidyanathan will be performing *Pratibodhana*, a dance production at BIAF this year. "The word 'pratibodhana' is Sanskrit for awakening," she says, adding that the performance has three compositions, all of which explore spiritual awakening.

While the first composition from Tamil poet Manikkavacakar urges listeners to rouse themselves from sleep, it also serves as a metaphor for waking up from the slumber of ignorance, says Rama.

"The second composition is about Kashi being the City of Light. Here too, Kashi is presented as metaphorical space for freedom and bliss; when you feel liberated in your heart, it is in a space called Kashi which is not a geographical place only. Everything about Kashi, how life and death are celebrated, *aghoras* who renounce material pleasure, the Vishwanath temple, metaphorically speaks about this space that liberates you"

Rama says the third and final composition is *Rasamandala*, about the *ras leela*, which again holds metaphorical significance as the dance always performed in circles denotes the continuity of breath, the connection between *jeevaatma* and *paramaatma*.

The danseuse who will be presenting *Pratibodhana* with her disciples, and has long been associated with BIAF, says, "I have been impressed by this festival and how it is a convergence of artistes from different genres. It is important for the community to come together as we can't always depend upon the government for finances."

Three day extravaganza

The Bengaluru International Arts Festival commences with its inauguration at Chowdiah Memorial Hall on March 22 at 6pm. This will be followed by a jugalbandi presented by flautist Ronu Majumdar with Suma Sudhindra on the veena, B C Manjunath on the mridangam, S N Narayanamurthy on the *ghatam* and Rajendra Nakod on the *tabla*.

The following day will open at 6.15pm with Pratibodhana, a dance performance by Rama Vaidyanathan.

After this, a 25-member dance ensemble will present *Silapadhikaram*, a dance drama revolving around the tale of Kannagi's anklet. Both dance performances will take place at Chowdiah Memorial Hall.

March 24, will see a host of music-related events that will begin at 10 in the morning and go on till 1pm, with an evening session that would commence at 6pm.

The following week will see Bhuvanesh Komkali, grandson of Kumar Gandharva, present a Hindustani concert on March 30, accompanied by Keshav Joshi on the tabala and Vyasa Murthy Katti on the harmonium from 6.30 pm onwards at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Race Course Road. The next morning, the concluding day of BIAF will see a sapling planting drive at 10.30am at Marasarahalli, Nelamangala.

For more details on BIAF, log on to www.biaf.co.in. Tickets on BookMyShow.

Make a splash Rebecca Mendonza . SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Holi at your ear

This Holi instead of wasting precious water, you could choose to make a splash with statement accessories from Rainbow Hues. The earrings featuring *pichkaris, baltis* and *gulal matkas* are crafted in acrylic. "Since Holi is a festival of colours, we have used bright pinks, greens, blues, gold and orange," says Rebecca Mendonza, who started Rainbow Hues two years ago at her home in Kamanahalli, Bengaluru.

The 34-year-old says she loved collecting jewellery and after the birth of her son, decided to turn her passion into a business. "We launch a collection every festival be it Christmas, Deepavali, Holi or Halloween, and season, – summer, monsoon and winter. For Christmas, there are Christmas tree and Santa Claus themed earrings while for Deepavali there are earrings with *anar, chakra,* rockets and *diyas*." Umbrellas, leaves and butterfly themed earrings, Rebecca says, do well all year round.

Apart from the festive and season themed accessories and the customised pieces, (name necklaces and earrings) Rainbow Hues has a range of quirky food-themed earrings and accessories. "We love to celebrate food and do so with accessories featuring *vada pav*, ice-cream, *samosa*, chilli, strawberry, avocado, pastry, doughnuts, momos, burgers, pizzas, *chai*, tender coconut, French fries, cupcakes, and coffee." The popcorn earrings, Rebecca says, are their best-selling food-themed accessory.

Rainbow Hues accessories are available online (rainbowhues.in) in the price range of ₹125 to ₹499

Verses on war and peace

Praveen Sudevan

Remember the solace of poetry amidst the global lockdown? The feeling that shared words could transcend the loneliness and fear? The ArtMantram Trust attempted to evoke this feeling with the Glass House Festival, wherein poets from many parts of the world shared and celebrated poetry. It is ready to rekindle that spirit with the first in-person edition of the festival in Bengaluru on March 23 and 24 at the Bangalore International Centre.

This year, the Glass House, put together by a strong curatorial team, expands its scope with a focus on 'Planet, Prosperity, People, and Peace', the festival's theme. Amidst a world fractured by conflict and turmoil, the festival creates a space where the power of words cannot only illuminate shared experiences but also spark vital conversations, inviting the public to be part of a larger dialogue and fostering a sense of global community.

"We found in that (lockdown) environment, we were turning to things like poetry to help us get through the moment, either writing or reading poetry," says Yamuna Hari Singh, founding trustee of ArtMantram, about the inaugural festival. This year's iteration builds on that legacy.

Rhyme and reason Some of the artistes performing at The Glass Festival. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Over 100 poets of diverse backgrounds will take the stage alongside workshops and performances. Expect recitative and slam poetry, translations, regional language showcases, close readings, and more. Distinguished names like Annie Zaidi (who will be participating online), Ashwani Kumar, and Gayatri Majumdar bring star power. The festival's heart, however, lies in its open invitation for poets and lovers of poetry from all walks of life to engage and become part of the artistic process, fostering a sense of belonging and global community.

"As a poet, I see poetry as a potent, condensed form. It can convey immense meaning in a short space like a telegram or the universe's Morse code. Layers of thought, rhythm, and stanzas allow poets to communicate quickly and deeply," says co-curator Rochelle Potkar, highlighting poetry's power to cut straight to core themes affecting us all.

This year, the Glass House, expands its scope with a focus on 'Planet, Prosperity, People, and Peace', the festival's theme

This commitment to meaningful dialogue shines through in the festival's programming. Panels will address Gaza, incarceration, freedom of speech, and environmental activism. Art also plays a pivotal role, with artists and poets sharing stages and even dance performances alongside poetry readings.

The first Glasshouse Festival was born from a moment of isolation. This 2024 edition carries a similar weight. "The zeitgeist we see that affects us is the violence... There's so much," explains Yamuna Hari Singh. But in its expanded form, the festival offers something more - a testament to poetry's ability to connect us across borders, whether physical or emotional.

As a hybrid event, including online sessions, poets worldwide contribute their voices - echoing the festival's first pandemic-era incarnation. "Poetry is a small form... What you can tell in poetry is like a telegram. You can tell so many things," Rochelle says. These telegrams of verse explore the complex challenges of our time.

Beyond the festival weekend, ArtMantram Trust envisions a lasting legacy. They see the gathered material, the recordings, and the sparked conversations as seeds. "We want to make sure the thoughts and ideas sparked by the Glass House Festival keep echoing in people's minds long after the two days are over," says Rochelle.

The two-day festival at Bangalore International Centre is free to attend. For more information, visit artmantram.org or bangaloreinternationalcentre.org.

Anurag Tagat

The royal story

Sing me a tune Frizzell D'Souza and Derek Mathias in 'Diana'. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

While watching the latest season of *The Crown*, the series on the British monarchy, singer-songwriter Frizzell D'souza thought about Princess Diana and it inspired 'Diana', a collaborative song with pianist, keyboardist and composer-producer Derek Mathias that released on March 15.

Frizzell says she was coming from a place of introspection about the "rebel of the Royal family who went on to become a people's icon".

Derek shares more about the story behind the song, "Sometimes certain things happen to us which makes us feel like the situation is bad. Later on, we realise that it was the best thing that could have happened and that you had originally viewed it from a negative perspective."

There is a sonic and narrative journey undertaken in the four-minute song, during which Frizzell uses 'Diana' to signify a character undergoing change – from struggle and suffering, to a complaint about innocence lost and finally, owning her new identity.

Frizzell says, "Then it goes, 'I know I'm out of the burning woods. I'm breathing'." The song comes with a music video directed by Prarthana Shetty that sees the artistes play a game of chess, portraying the roles of Diana and Charles III, "working their way towards checkmate," as Frizzell, puts it.

The city-based artistes first crossed paths early last year at a gig series; by then, they both had made their own in-roads into the independent music circuit.

Derek had released his jazz band's debut album, *Derek & The Cats* in 2022, while Frizzell's debut EP *The Hills Know of You* had also come out that year.

It was a mutual appreciation that built up to Derek and his band becoming part of Frizzell's live act.

Described as jazz-pop by the artistes, Derek was also influenced by the likes of Steely Dan and their album *Aja*, specifically the drumbeat that eventually sparked the idea of 'Diana.' The band later added layers of keyboards, saxophone, percussion, guitar, and bass.

If this was Derek & The Cats' first track to feature vocals, 'Diana' also marks a different vocal approach for Frizzell in terms of harmonies and cadence. "I think their music itself pushed me to write differently," she says.

It was not an easy place to get to, however. The singer recounts writing an initial idea for the outro to the song that no one on the project was happy with. "I rewrote the whole thing and when it worked, it clicked and you could see it on everyone's face."

With this collaboration out now, both artistes are pitching a double-headline set to venues. Derek says, "This is song is the perfect middle ground between Frizzell's sort of sound and our sort of sound. So we're planning to have these sets which show these two worlds."

Diana is now out on all streaming platforms

INBRIEF

C.P. Radhakrishnan sworn in as Telangana Governor

Jharkhand Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan assumed the office of Governor of Telangana on Wednesday. Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court Alok Aradhe administered the oath of office to the new Governor at Raj Bhavan in the presence of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy. Tamilisai Soundararajan resigned as the State's Governor on Monday.

PIL seeking Hyderabad as common capital dismissed

A Division Bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court dismissed a PIL petition filed by Naraparedy Kiran Kumar Reddy, a social worker from Nellore district, seeking directions to the Central government to declare Hyderabad as the common capital of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana till 2034. The Bench, led by Chief Justice Dhiraj Singh Thakur, said the matter was beyond its purview and hence it could not take a decision on the petition. The court said that directing Parliament to make or amend laws was not within its powers.

Teppotsavams in Tirumala Venkateswara temple begins

The five-day annual Teppotsavams (float festival) began at the temple of Lord Venkateswara in Andhra Pradesh's Tirumala on Wednesday. The idols of Lord Sri Rama along with those of Lakshmana, Sita and Hanuman were mounted atop the two-tier flotilla and dipped thrice in the waters of *pushkarini* (temple tank). The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has also arranged for *Sahasra Deepalankara Seva* on all five days of the festival.

Lok Sabha poll: DMK fields 10 incumbents, 11 new faces in T.N.

The candidate list features three women; a notable incumbent who has not made the cut this time is Gautham Sigamani of Kallakurichi

Making a pitch: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president M.K. Stalin and other leaders releasing the party's manifesto and list of candidates in Chennai on Wednesday. ANI

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Chief Minister and DMK president M.K. Stalin on Wednesday released a list of 21 party candidates, including three women, for the Lok Sabha election. The list features 10 incumbents and 11 new faces.

Leader of the DMK Parliamentary Party in the Lok Sabha and party treasurer T.R. Baalu will contest again from Sriperumbudur, while party deputy general secretaries Kanimozhi Karunanidhi and A. Raja will re-enter the fray from Thoothukudi and the Nilgiris (SC), respectively.

The party renominated the incumbents from all three Lok Sabha constituencies in Chennai – Kalanidhi Veerasamy (Chennai North), Dayanidhi Maran (Chennai Central), and Thamizhachi Thangapandian (Chennai South). The other incumbents on the list include S. Jagathrakshakan from Arakkonam, D.M. Kathir Anand from Vellore, K. Selvam from Kancheepuram (SC), and C.N. Annadurai from Tiruvannamalai.

A notable incumbent who did not figure on the list this time is Gautham Sigamani (Kallakurichi), son of former Higher Education Minister K. Ponmudy. Another significant incumbent who is missing from the list is S.S. Palanimanickam, who won the Thanjavur seat six times.

In Salem, the party has fielded T.M. Selvaganapathy, a heavyweight and a former AIADMK Minister who joined the DMK in 2008. He was also a DMK Rajya Sabha member, but was disqualified following his conviction in a corruption case. However, last November, the Madras High Court set aside his conviction, facilitating his return to electoral politics.

Thanga Thamizhselvan, a former AIADMK and AMMK man, who unsuccessfully fought against former Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam in the last Assembly election, will contest from Theni.

Other candidates include A. Mani from Dharmapuri, who replaces the popular S. Senthilkumar; M.S. Dharanivendhan from Arani; Malaiyarasan from Kallakurichi; K.E. Prakash from Erode; Ganapathy P. Rajkumar from Coimbatore; K. Eswarasamy from Pollachi; K.N. Arun Nehru from Perambalur; S. Murasoli from Thanjavur; and Rani Srikumar from Tenkasi (SC).

The DMK has concluded seat-sharing arrangements with its allies in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, and has allotted 10 seats to the Congress (plus the single seat in Puducherry), two seats each to the CPI, the CPI(M) and the VCK, and one seat each to the IUML, the MDMK, and the KMDK.

ED freezes assets worth ₹4.4 crore of Kerala native, associates

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has frozen bank balances and fixed deposits (FDs) worth ₹4.4 crore of Muhammed Hafiz of Chengala, Kasaragod, and a few others associated with him.

The investigation agency also seized gold jewellery weighing 1,672.8 grams, Indian currency worth ₹12.5 Lakh, seven mobile phones and various documents following searches conducted at nine locations across Kerala, Karnataka and Goa last week.

The search operations were carried out under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, according to a communication.

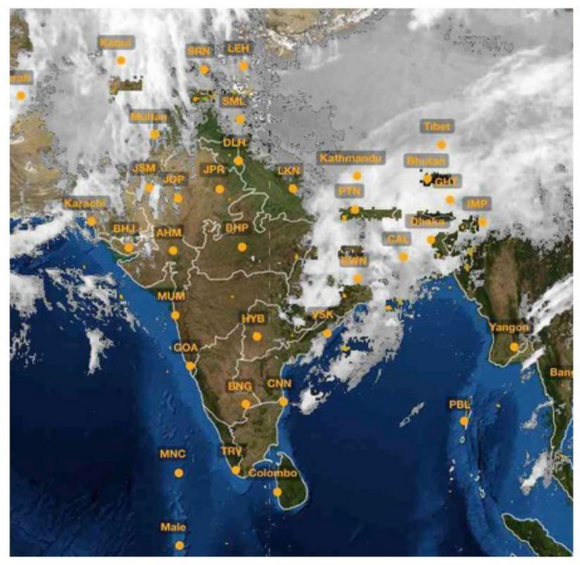
Incidentally, Abdul Lahir Hassan, Hafiz's father-in-law, had filed a police complaint against him in 2022 for duping him of ₹92 crore. Mr. Hassan claimed that his son-in-law swindled the money by emotionally blackmailing his daughter, seeking more dowry. The money was swindled from July 2018 to March 2022.

Recently, the Crime Branch had taken over the investigation in the case after Mr. Hassan took up his complaint with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Mr. Hassan, who hails from Aluva, is running a few educational institutions and a construction business in the UAE.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Thursday: Heavy rainfall/snowfall likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya. Thunderstorm with lightning/hail likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, Bihar, Jharkhand, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, Kerala and Mahe

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	1	29.6	22.0	Kozhikode	—	36.1	26.8
Ahmedabad	—	38.3	19.8	Kurnool	—	38.7	25.8
Aizawl	—	30.5	16.4	Lucknow	—	32.0	14.5
Allahabad	—	33.8	14.7	Madurai	—	37.0	24.1
Bengaluru	—	34.6	21.0	Mangaluru	—	32.9	23.8
Bhopal	—	33.9	18.2	Mumbai	—	38.7	20.2
Bhubaneswar	6.4	19.2	17.4	Mysuru	—	35.5	22.0
Chandigarh	—	31.0	13.3	New Delhi	—	33.6	13.7
Chennai	—	33.1	25.6	Patna	6	26.0	21.0
Coimbatore	—	36.6	22.8	Port Blair	—	31.7	25.7
Dehradun	—	32.2	13.0	Puducherry	—	33.2	24.6
Gangtok	2	11.5	10.2	Pune	—	36.0	18.7
Goa	—	33.8	21.5	Raipur	—	32.1	17.2
Guwahati	1	25.0	17.0	Ranchi	7	24.4	15.2
Hubballi	—	38.0	22.0	Shillong	3	12.7	11.0
Hyderabad	—	32.0	22.4	Shimla	—	24.8	11.0
Imphal	2	29.9	14.7	Srinagar	—	22.8	4.2
Jaipur	—	33.0	20.4	Thiruvananthapuram	—	35.0	23.7
Kochi	—	33.0	24.2	Tiruchi	—	36.7	23.6
Kohima	4	16.0	12.6	Vijayawada	—	33.5	24.0
Kolkata	11	21.7	18.8	Visakhapatnam	0.2	29.2	25.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.15	..51	.32	...227	...164	
Bengaluru	.16	..17	.52	...278	.....—	
Chennai	.11	..12	.80	78	82	
Delhi	.25	..94	.51	...264	...306	
Hyderabad	.22	..16	.31	61	78	
Kolkata	.14	..20	.37	42	52	
Lucknow	.11	..11	.52	...208	...135	
Mumbai	.79	..69	.99	...115	...115	
Pune	.84	114	113	55	62	
Visakhapatnam	.12	..44	.32	63	89	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Byrnihat, Assam recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 344 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh recorded a healthy AQI score of 21

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Arrangements in place in Kerala for LS poll, says CEO

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Social media platforms will be closely watched for misinformation campaigns in the run-up to the April 26 Lok Sabha poll in Kerala, Sanjay Kaul, Chief Electoral Officer (Kerala), said here on Wednesday.

Briefing the media on the election arrangements, Mr. Kaul said legal action would be initiated against people or groups using social media to spread false information.

A special social media cell is operational as part of the surveillance measures. After it kicked in, 2,038 complaints were filed through the c-Vigil app, Mr. Kaul said.

Rest on banks

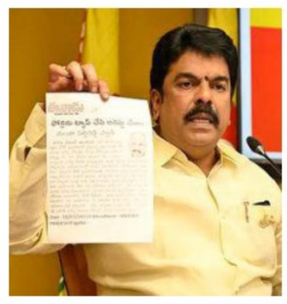
No use: Fishermen have anchored their boats as the water level has come down in Krishna river in Vijayawada on Wednesday. K.V.S. GIRI

Opposition leaders' phones are under surveillance in A.P., alleges TDP leader

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

TDP Polit Bureau member and former MLA Bonda Umamaheswara Rao on Wednesday alleged that the phones of the leaders of Opposition parties and heads of some constitutional bodies were being tapped.

Addressing the media, the TDP leader said Additional Superintendents of Police (ASPs) Narender Reddy, Ravindra Reddy and Venugopal Reddy, were tapping the phones on orders from the Andhra Pradesh government by using the Pegasus spyware purchased by it.



TDP leader Umamaheswara Rao addressing the media in Guntur district. G.N. RAO

Mr. Rao also alleged that Inspector-General of Police (Vigilance & Enforcement) K. Raghuram Reddy was implicating the leaders of the TDP and Jana Sena Party (JSP) in false cases.

These and other IPS officers were resorting to illegal activities at the behest of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and its president and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, the TDP leader said.

Seeks EC probe

Mr. Rao said the mobile phones of TDP national president N. Chandrababu Naidu, JSP president Pawan Kalyan and State BJP president Daggubati Purandeswari were being tapped, and "it has been a continuous activity with clear political objectives."

The TDP leader demanded that the Election Commission (EC) investigate the phone tapping episode and take action against the police officers concerned.

As oil sardine catch dwindles, Kerala fishermen seek crackdown on trawling

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

Fishermen have sought a discussion on what they call a "disappearing act" once again in recent years by "enigmatic" oil sardines from the Kerala coast, where sardine fisheries directly support a population of at least 70,000.

The government must check illegal practices that eat into sardine fisheries and discuss and investigate the virtual disappearance of big-size sardines, says Antony Kurisinkal, a fisherman from Arthunkal and State committee member of the Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation.

Sardine landings were the lowest in two decades in 2019. FILE PHOTO

He says what is being caught normally nowadays is above the legal size, and in the size range of 15 to 16 cm. But even these are not being landed frequently over the last month.

Indian oil sardine fisheries account for 17% to 20% of the marine fish landings and used to be top-ranked in landing volumes. But its availability is prone to fluctuations and makes it an enigma to researchers, fishers, and managers, say scientists at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute in a study published in 2019.

Available data underscores the steep rise and fall in oil sardine catch in Kerala. Oil sardine landings were the lowest in two decades in 2019.

The year 2022 was marked as a comeback of oil sardine and the Kerala coast saw the landings go up to 1.1 lakh tonnes. Most of the recovery in oils sardine landings in 2022 was in the second half of the year.

Mr. Antony demanded that the government stop illegal practices such as night trawling, light trawling, and pelagic trawling to help sardine fisheries make a comeback.

Tamilisai rejoins BJP after quitting gubernatorial posts

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Former Governor of Telangana and Lieutenant-Governor of Puducherry Tamilisai Soundararajan, who resigned from her gubernatorial posts two days ago, rejoined the BJP on Wednesday.

Ms. Soundararajan was inducted into the party in the presence of BJP State president K. Annamalai, Union Ministers G. Kishan Reddy and L. Murugan, and other senior leaders at the BJP's State headquarters in Chennai. She is set to contest the upcoming Lok Sabha election from Tamil Nadu.

Tamilisai Soundararajan rejoining the BJP in the presence of Tamil Nadu BJP chief K. Annamalai. PTI

Ms. Soundararajan joined the BJP in 1999 and served in various capacities, including as its State president for five years. She formally resigned from the party in 2019 to assume office as the Governor of Telangana. Later, she was given additional charge as Lieutenant-Governor of Puducherry.

Addressing the media after rejoining the BJP, she said, "I quit the Governor's post to become one of the 400 MPs (a target set by the BJP for the 2024 poll) of the Lok Sabha. As Governor, I worked with four Chief Ministers and faced many challenges. Being a member of the BJP is what I really want." She said the BJP gave a lot of importance to women.

"The public meetings of Prime Minister Modi and the *padayatra* of Mr. Annamalai have created a huge impact in Tamil Nadu," she said.

Seizures in Karnataka cross ₹27 cr. in four days

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Election Commission has made total seizures worth over ₹7 crore in the last 24 hours. With this, the total seizures since March 16 when the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) came into force in Karnataka touched ₹27.62 crore.

After MCC came into force, the amount of cash seized was ₹5.85 crore, while liquor worth ₹21.48 crore, narcotics worth ₹15.21 lakh, and freebies worth ₹5.87 lakh were seized, said a release. A total of 205 FIRs have been registered.

Ferocious friends

While allowing for a choice of pets, their raising should not be an unbridled right

The relationship between dogs and their place in society opens up vexing dilemmas in India. On one hand there is the problem of street dogs. Citizens all over the country may complain about their residential colonies being under attack by roving canines but this has not yet spurred any significant political response to enforce existing municipal laws to contain their numbers. On the other hand, it seems that even pet dogs too have managed to raise an entirely different class of concerns meriting the attention of a central government ministry and two High Courts. Among the questions being deliberated upon is whether certain breeds of dogs are inherently more "ferocious" than others. An expert committee constituted by the Department of Animal Welfare and Husbandry, Ministry of Agriculture, has recommended that certain breeds of "ferocious dogs" be prohibited from being kept as pets. Such a committee was constituted after citizen groups complained of attacks on people – sometimes fatal – by these dogs, which prompted a petition in the Delhi High Court requesting it to ban certain breeds.

These include mixed and crossbreeds such as Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, Fila Brasileiro, Dogo Argentino, American Bulldog, Boerboel, Kangal, Central Asian Shepherd Dog, among others. These rules are expected to be implemented by local authorities. Dogs that have already been kept as pets must be sterilised to ensure that further breeding does not happen. The Karnataka High Court recently stayed the government order after some petitioners objected that the government department move was unilateral and did not encompass a wide enough spectrum of expert bodies. The Kennel Club of India, a body that deals with registering purebreeds, could stand to be at a disadvantage by this decision. Years of observation and insight into the temperament of dogs have shown that ferocity and aggressiveness are a result of both environmental and behavioural factors. Thus, the age, sex, size, familiarity with other dogs, the way it is trained, and the circumstances that provoke aggression all contribute to ferocity. That said, several countries have banned certain breeds or have imposed stringent conditions to own or maintain certain dog breeds. None of these countries anyway permits street dogs in the way India does and so the regulations are premised on higher standards of public safety than in India. Thus, the existence or absence of certain breeds of dogs is less likely to make a difference to public safety than making dog owners more liable for harm caused. While individual choice in choosing and raising pets matters, it is by no means an unbridled right.

The lure of lucre

The IPL is becoming more attractive than Tests for some players

Close on the heels of the successful conduct of the Women's Premier League (WPL), the Indian Premier League (IPL) looms into view. The 17th edition will commence with the fixture between defending champion Chennai Super Kings (CSK) and Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) at Chennai on Friday. The WPL's second edition that crowned RCB as champions will also put additional pressure on the Bengaluru outfit's male unit as it is one squad that has often promised much but has never won the IPL. Meanwhile CSK, a blue chip team in the league, would ride on M.S. Dhoni's astute leadership and his ability to stay relevant as an athlete even after clocking 42 summers. Dhoni in T20s and England's James Anderson, who is plying his wares in Tests while being 41, highlight the progress in modern-day fitness and sports medicine. As with the two cricketers, the IPL has found a way to march ahead, be it general elections or the COVID-19 pandemic. The league's management was quick to shift roots to South Africa or the United Arab Emirates, and with another general election chugging in, it remains to be seen how the authorities would cope. Matches have been listed till April 7 even as the remaining league stretches deep into May.

Besides trying to meet their club's goals, the players, both Indian and overseas stars, will have an eye on the ICC T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the United States during June. The focus would also be on Rishabh Pant, elevated as Delhi Capitals' skipper. Having recovered from a ghastly road accident, Pant's recovery over a year has been a triumph of will and his Indian comeback would hinge on how he performs in this T20 event. Team compositions too would come under scrutiny and the most interesting would be the leadership change effected at Mumbai Indians with Hardik Pandya appointed as the captain. It is a move that drew flak from his predecessor Rohit Sharma's legion of fans besides affecting others such as Jasprit Bumrah and Suryakumar Yadav. With 10 teams vying for the top honours, the IPL is a commercial behemoth. It also meant that some players prioritised this championship over national duty. That the BCCI had to offer monetary incentives for players to turn up for Tests, is truly an ironic moment as it is their much-hyped product, the IPL, which is cannibalising talent from the longer format. Until now this was seen as an issue affecting other teams, primarily the West Indies, but now this problem has hit closer home.

India's voters deserve a bond — of probity

Ashok Lavasa

is a former Election Commissioner and a former Finance Secretary of India

There are a few basic tenets of good laws and public policies: lack of ambiguity, enforceability, predictability, and accountability. All laws and policies are framed with the purpose of addressing a public issue with a view to improving the situation from when the problem was identified. Therefore, the outcome should be evaluated keeping in mind the objectives behind that law or policy.

In this framework, let us look at the genesis, design, and demise of the Electoral Bond Scheme (EBS).

A 'clean' channel

In paragraph 143 of his Budget Speech 2017-18, the then Finance Minister stated that the objective of his government was "to eliminate black money".

And there was a problem statement (in paragraphs 164 and 165.): "Even 70 years after Independence, the country has not been able to evolve a transparent method of funding political parties which is vital to the system of free and fair elections. An attempt was made in the past by amending the provisions of the Representation of Peoples Act, the Companies Act and the Income Tax Act to incentivise donations by individuals, partnership firms, HUFs and companies to political parties.... The situation has only marginally improved since these provisions were brought into force. Political parties continue to receive most of their funds through anonymous donations which are shown in cash.... An effort, therefore, requires to be made to cleanse the system of political funding in India."

The cause for the problem was stated to be donors' "reluctance in donating by cheque or other transparent methods as it would disclose their identity and entail adverse consequences".

As a solution, the Finance Minister proposed a reform, the EBS, which "will bring about greater transparency and accountability in political funding, while preventing future generation of black money". The outcome, he expected, was that this approach "will change the colour of money".

There can be no gainsaying that political parties – the "essential ingredient of a multi-party Parliamentary democracy" – were surviving on contributions less than ₹20,000 each that did not require a disclosure of the identity of the contributors. This was how black money was allegedly finding its way to the accounts of political parties that enjoyed income-tax exemption. The fact that crores of rupees were spent during elections before and after the EBS is a separate and serious malaise that no law has been able to cure. The EBS too has not succeeded in this despite its stated objective. Thus, while political parties have been enriched through the EBS, money used in election campaigns may have still not changed colour.

There is no doubt that the EBS created a 'clean' channel for funds to flow from the donor's bank account to the political party's bank account. The questionable presumption is that since funds used to purchase the bond are drawn from an account in a designated bank, the source of those funds is also 'clean'. The Supreme Court observed that a similar channel existed, and still does, in the form of the Electoral Trusts, which is more transparent.

> Political parties need to ask themselves why they are not determined to accept clean money

The information that the State Bank of India has disclosed so far shows that many purchasers bought bonds that seem to be disproportionate to their business income. There are obvious questions about the legitimacy of the sources of the funds being used for the purchase. It cannot be said with certainty that the funds that reached the designated account of the political parties were of the same "colour". There were no safeguards to protect the so-called clean channel from being contaminated.

Defenders of the EBS have argued that if there are doubts about the sources of the funds used to purchase the bonds, this would be easy to investigate. The question is who will conduct the investigation? Will it not be the same agencies that are accused of directing donations to the party in power, be it in a State or at the centre? Therein lies the rub.

However, the real twist in the tale is that according to Section 7(4) of The Electoral Bond Scheme, 2018, the information furnished by the buyer "shall be treated confidential by the authorised bank and shall not be disclosed to any authority for any purposes, except when demanded by a competent court or upon registration of criminal case by any law enforcement agency". It is being said by the 'designers' of the EBS that the bank could not have legally kept any record of the secret number on the bond issued to the purchaser (in keeping with the provision of anonymity enshrined in the EBS). If this is the case, it would be almost impossible to establish any link between purchaser and recipient.

This would mean that, as in the real life example of dispensing currency notes to a bank customer/the common man, the SBI does not have any record of the person who purchased a specific bond. The alphanumeric number in the bond was only embedded to verify the authenticity of the bond and thus meet the audit requirement. The bond was akin to currency – and this is why the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised objections in the beginning, which led to the amendment in the RBI Act.

That raises a few important questions.

Pertinent questions

Will this limited information with the SBI, when disclosed to an enforcement agency, reveal the identity of the purchaser but limit the scope of the investigations only to the sources of funds? Does this not rule out the possibility of providing the donor-political party link, thereby eliminating the clue that would be vital to probe allegations of a quid pro quo? Does it mean that the EBS created fiction – of the enforceability of the law and the accountability of the bank towards the court and the law enforcement agency? But finally, does not the 'confidentiality clause' apply to "information submitted by the purchaser", which was to be kept "undisclosed till asked for'? How could it mean not maintaining a record in order to fulfil its obligation to enforce the law of the land? If the SBI did not maintain any record, on what basis did it ask for time to collate information on the bonds that would link both the parties? Indeed, on what basis did the Supreme Court observe in April 2019 that the information is not behind "iron curtains incapable of being pierced"?

The SBI's affidavit on March 21 will make it clear whether the law was deficient or illusory in its design or that full disclosure was being dodged.

The Court mandated disclosures mean that there could now be wild allegations of corruption with the possibility of endless investigations under Prevention of Corruption Act, and for the tax authorities also to investigate the sources of funds used in buying the bonds. Thus, those who contributed to the ruling party face allegations of *quid pro quo*. And those who have not could face the "adverse consequences" the scheme was designed to avoid. If political parties cannot disclose the names of all those who contributed, they create an uneven playing field for donors after their donations helped in creating a permanent non-level playing field among recipients.

This appears to be the opposite of a win-win situation, with the political parties having the last laugh. No wonder, the road to hell is often paved with good intentions.

It is for Parliament to work it out

Many proponents of the EBS have criticised the Court for not suggesting a 'less worse' method of political funding and dragging political parties to the "dark alleys" of black money. I do not think it was/is for the courts to decide the future course because Parliament has the mandate to find a solution and has 'superior' wisdom in making laws (as was seen in the case of the appointments of the Election Commissioners). A reasonable way forward can only be found through a well-meaning consultative process and not through court fiats, or laws and policies crafted in secret to deal with complex and vexed problems.

Where are we headed with a public debate where the gravity of an offence is sought to be determined by per capita crime? Why are political parties not determined to accept clean money, and not funds that are "furtively slipped under the door"? Will political parties keep holding up the mirror to each other and leave people blinded? People crave for political parties with a difference but not those so different that they look alike. How long can we accept the specious explanation that people get the government that they deserve? I think voters deserve better. They deserve a bond of probity.

Eliminating diseases, one region at a time

Rajeev Sadanandan

is CEO, Health Systems Transformation Platform and a former Health Secretary, Kerala

The Carter Center, a leader in the global elimination and eradication of diseases, recently reported that guinea worm disease was close to eradication. From 3.5 million cases a year in 21 countries in 1986, the number had come down to 13 in five countries in 2023, a reduction of 99.99%. This would be the second disease after smallpox to be eradicated and the first one with no known medicines or vaccines. This has created increased attention to disease elimination, the first step in eradication. Ending the epidemics of malaria, tuberculosis and Neglected Tropical Diseases by 2030 is one of the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations.

On disease elimination, its focus

Elimination of transmission, which targets achieving zero transmission in a defined region, is different from eradication, which is the permanent cessation of infection by a pathogen with no risk of reintroduction. It is a highly desirable objective to enhance the health of the people, especially the poor who are most vulnerable to infectious diseases. There are many reasons to recommend disease elimination as a public health strategy. As a national goal it energises the public health system.

The requirements for certification by international agencies are rigorous and preparing for it improves primary health care, diagnostics and surveillance. It will lead to increased involvement of field staff and community health workers, enthused by the clearly defined goal, and attract international support. Above all, it generates high political and bureaucratic commitment, and public support. These efforts positively impact the health system.

But, elimination of transmission is challenging and resource intensive. It imposes an onerous load on the system and could lead to the neglect of other important health functions, especially for weak health systems. Therefore, disease elimination should be planned only after careful analysis of the costs and benefits and with informed political support to generate the best outcomes with the least adverse impact.

> Multisectoral collaboration, encouraging innovation and adopting locally effective solutions which facilitate disease elimination, is more effective at the regional level

While elimination is scientifically feasible for all the diseases targeted by India, it will be strategic to focus on those pathogens whose impact on the population is high and whose numbers are low enough to make elimination feasible. If the prevalence of a disease in a population is high, at the first stage, the aim should be to reduce their numbers to the level where elimination is practical, through disease control. This will enable an understanding of the processes and cost of elimination and provide an opportunity to strengthen the existing health systems to handle the rigour of implementing elimination.

Need for surveillance systems

The government must be prepared to invest in developing surveillance systems capable of capturing every incidence of the disease, strengthening laboratories for screening and confirmation, ensuring that medicines and consumables are available, and training the workforce on the rigorous requirements of an elimination strategy. Even after elimination is achieved, surveillance has to be continued to detect reintroduction as the pathogen would not have been eradicated.

From this point of view, elimination of many of the diseases targeted by the country may be difficult to achieve for the entire nation within the declared time frame. But they are achievable for some diseases in some parts of the country. For instance, kala azar is now limited to five States in India, primarily prevalent in a few blocks in two States.

India accounts for 40% of the global case load of lymphatic filariasis, which was targeted for elimination by the World Health Assembly in a resolution in 1997. It is prevalent only in a few States and can be eliminated by a combination of surveillance, vector control, drug administration and morbidity management.

On the other hand, pathogens of some targeted diseases have long incubation periods. They are prevalent in high numbers in many parts of the country, and have developed drug resistance. For them, the strategy of elimination needs to be reworked into a localised and phased one. The diseases that can be eliminated easily in defined geographical regions – States, districts, blocks – can be targeted for elimination within those regions.

After regional certification, such areas can be ring-fenced with better control in the adjoining areas which can then move to elimination, when they are assessed to be ready.

From the regional level

Multisectoral collaboration, encouraging innovation and adopting locally effective solutions which facilitate disease elimination, is done more effectively at the regional level. Smaller units can also redeploy resources to better manage the additional load without affecting other essential tasks. While elimination can proceed region wise, national and State governments should own the process. The phasing of regional elimination to culminate at the national level has to be planned from the perspective of the entire country. Regional implementation needs technical and material support and the progress of regional elimination has to be monitored. Similarly, only the Union government can deal with the spread of diseases across States and at the ports of entry, to control reintroduction. In India, national elimination can be achieved most effectively, by starting with elimination and scaling it up, region by region, across the country.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Governors, politics

Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan has quit from the gubernatorial office to contest in the general election. It has serious implications as far as the image of the high constitutional office is concerned. Mizoram Governor K. Rajasekharan quit in 2019 to take the political plunge. These cases strengthen the perception that political appointees to the office of the Governor never rise above political loyalties, instead damaging the credibility of the office.

S.V. Venkatakrishnan,
Bengaluru

One has to respect institutional decisions. Once the Supreme Court suspended the sentence and stayed the conviction of former Tamil Nadu Minister Ponmudy, State Governor R.N. Ravi is on weak ground not to swear him in again. It is the height of constitutional subversion. It is not clear under what provision of the Constitution the Governor is acting.

A constitutional functionary has an obligation to act fairly and not become a hindrance to democratic functioning. The Tamil Madu Governor has repeatedly acted against the interests of the State. It is high time he is recalled.

N.G.R. Prasad,
Chennai

Remark, political row

To any discerning mind, it is clear and evident that the Prime Minister has been conveniently and purposely distorting Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's "Shakti" remarks. The top leader is playing to the gallery for electoral gains. There should be a limit for stooping to conquer. People are not so naive and can see through the games politicians play.

C.G. Kuriakose,
Kothamangalam, Kerala

Data marketplaces: the next frontier

Jyotsana Singh
is a research fellow at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy under its Applied law and technology and Fintech verticals

The role of digitisation in realising India's vision of becoming a $5 trillion economy cannot be overstated. As per a NASSCOM report, data and artificial intelligence (AI) can add approximately $450-500 billion to India's GDP by 2025. Rapid digitisation of government operations, however, is accompanied by increasing volumes of citizen data. Such data is typically of two kinds – Personal Data i.e., data containing identifiers through which an individual can be mapped; and Non-Personal Data (NPD) i.e., data excluding personal data.

NPD constitutes the primary kind of citizen data obtained by the government, which possesses the potential of serving as a 'public good'. To create synergies and devise scalable solutions, integration of NPD in the dispensation of public services is generally being advocated for. Application of high value advanced analytics and AI to NPD across key sectors of the economy can help predict socially and economically sound outcomes. Junctures where such data-driven insights can better inform governance and public functions are meteorological and disaster forecasts, infrastructure capacity and citizen use-patterns, mobility and housing patterns, and employment trends, to name a few.

Unfortunately, unlike Personal Data, there is a stark absence of regulation for NPD. As of date, efforts have been made at the executive level to construct governance policies for the same. The expert committee chaired by Kris Gopalakrishnan in its reports dealt with this at length. Noteworthy issues such as the risk of de-anonymisation of NPD, the institutionalisation of a central authority for NPD, and ownership and data sharing mechanisms were raised therein. Subsequently, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY) released the National Data Governance Framework Policy (NPD Framework) which was touted as the first building block of the digital architecture being conceived to maximise data-driven governance. Notwithstanding, neither of the above mentioned provides for an enforceable regime for NPD in India. For this reason, vast reservoirs of NPD stand unregulated and are supported only by limited guidance in dissemination, use, or exchange thereof. Such a de-siloed accumulation results in sub-optimal legal and policy decisions, and engenders sub-par strategies at sectoral and national levels.

Data exchanges are scalable ecosystems which galvanise multiple stakeholders. This makes them a fertile ground for deploying advanced analytics for outcome-oriented decision making and helps achieve economies of scale.

The unprotected inter-flow of NPD across government departments, third-parties, and citizens can make sensitive aspects of NPD vulnerable due to privacy breaches. This can unfairly benefit capacity-carrying actors like Big Tech. The imperfect analysis of crucial public trends can result in faulty decision-making. Such exchange of data is also inefficient as it fails to unlock the power of interdisciplinary legislative and policy-making.

The NPD Framework, being a pioneering step, also exhibits several gaps. It formulates abstract high-level principles and objectives for NPD governance but lacks tangible, actionable guidance to achieve them. While legislation is expected, practical operationalisation is overlooked, leaving questions unanswered regarding stakeholder rights and obligations across sectors. Additionally, mechanisms for pricing of data and appropriate legal structures for data exchange are not addressed. The absence of standardised governance tools compounds these challenges.

The unprotected inter-flow of NPD across government departments, third-parties, and citizens can make sensitive aspects of NPD vulnerable due to privacy breaches

A critical evaluation of the NPD Framework to address the existing gaps will be beneficial. This will supplement MeiTY's effort to regulate NPD and will help forge data exchanges as suitable media to make NPD interoperable across sectors. By creating a regulatory design for data exchanges in India, public-welfare functions can be digitised and automated to a large extent. This reduces administrative burden, facilitates inter-sectoral integration, builds the safeguards to using/sharing NPD, and makes digitisation of civic functions more participatory in nature.

In Australia, data exchange frameworks and data exchange protocols have been adopted. Data exchanges have been incorporated for sectors such as housing, employment, aged care, agriculture, etc. Similarly, the U.K. and Estonia have also constructed data exchanges specifically to tackle the issue of unemployment.

Formulating a blueprint

In India, the State of Telangana has designed an agriculture data exchange, while India Urban Data Exchange has been established by the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Science. Similarly, the Department of Science & Technology has announced its intention to set up data exchanges to implement aspects of the National Geospatial Policy.

Given the budding interest in data exchange structures, it is crucial to formulate a blueprint for governing them in India. Such examination will be at pace with the global discourse on the regulation of data exchanges and supplement the efforts of MeiTY, the expert committee, and other bodies vis-à-vis governance of NPD in India. It will also help operationalise the high-level principles of NPD in India by providing an actionable pathway and laying a forward-thinking framework for the governance of NPD in respect of data exchanges.

BJP's dwindling popularity in A.P.

The lack of assurances from the Modi government is central to the narrative

STATE OF PLAY

Sumit Bhattacharjee
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In 2014, Telugu Desam Party's (TDP) N. Chandrababu Naidu stormed into power in Andhra Pradesh and became the Chief Minister of the State for the third time. He had defeated his closest rival Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP).

But at that time he rode the 'Modi' wave, as TDP had fought the election in alliance with the BJP and actor-turned-politician Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena Party (JSP) and he was part of the NDA.

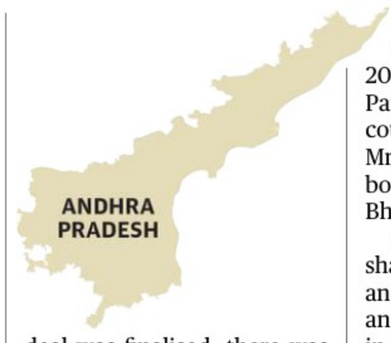
Again for the upcoming General and Assembly elections, the same combination is back as Mr. Naidu had quit the alliance over differences that cropped up on the agreement of allotting Special Category Status (SCS).

Many terms this move of the alliance as an 'opportunistic' as primarily BJP wants to regain its lost ground in Andhra Pradesh and Mr. Naidu needs a strong ally to take on the might of Mr. Jagan Reddy.

But the question is whether this combination will work this time.

Primarily, Mr. Pawan had joined hands with the TDP in September 2023. He had gone ahead announcing the alliance when Mr. Naidu was serving the judicial remand period for his alleged involvement in the Andhra Pradesh Skill Development Corporation scam. This did not go well with the BJP's State leadership and they openly came forward to say that the BJP was not consulted and it was Mr. Pawan's decision.

It took almost five months for Mr. Pawan and Mr. Naidu to seal the deal. Even after the



deal was finalised, there was dissent among the mid and lower rung BJP leadership in the State and they are not happy with it. They were open in saying that it was Mr. Naidu who had walked out of the 2014 alliance in 2018 and that he attacked Mr. Modi ferociously both at political and personal levels. With this as a backdrop, the working of the alliance may not have the bonhomie that was present in the 2014 election.

As of now the primary concern for all the three parties is the seat-sharing issue. The BJP struck a hard bargain to wrest about six Lok Sabha seats, this leaves TDP with 17 seats and JSP with just two seats. Coming to the Assembly, TDP will contest 144 seats, BJP in 10 and JSP in 21.

In the seat-sharing, some of the prominent names were seen missing in the TDP, which is no doubt the most dominant party among the three and has a vote share of about 40 percent. It is also the party that has the strongest cadre base and can field potential MLA candidates from all the 25 Lok Sabha constituencies and 175 Assembly seats.

With just about six to seven weeks left for the elections, Mr. Naidu is now busy firefighting the dissidence within his party.

In 2014, though JSP was part of the alliance, it did not fight the elections. JSP also walked out of the alliance and had gone to the polls in 2019 with the Bahujan Samaj Party and the left parties. It could win only one seat, with Mr. Pawan himself losing from both seats – Gajuwaka and Bhimavaram.

In 2014, the BJP had a vote share of about four percent and could win four MLA seats and two Lok Sabha seats, but in 2019 it dropped to below one and drew a nil.

Most importantly, there is considerable resentment against the national party, and people blame it for not giving the SCS, completing the Polavaram project, non operational Railway Zone in Visakhapatnam and putting up a public sector like Visakhapatnam Steel Plant for sale.

No assurances

At this juncture, the electorate of Andhra Pradesh had anticipated that Mr. Modi would give some concrete assurance during his speech at Chilakaluripet on March 17. This was Mr. Modi's first public appearance after the elections were declared and it was also the first after the alliance was sealed with TDP and JSP. The YSRCP's Advisor (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, had gone on record calling the alliance a farce, as the PM had not given assurance to anything.

Political pundits feel that if the BJP has to regain some of its lost ground, then some assurances have to be given. It should be similar to what Union Minister Amit Shah had done in Chhattisgarh. Just before the Assembly polls, he assured in a public meeting that the NMDC's Nagarnar steel, which was also put up for sale, would not be privatised. And that had an impact in changing the tide for the BJP in its favour.

Top 1% Indians' income share is higher now than under British-rule

Post-liberalisation, the income share of the top 10% skyrocketed, with that of middle 40% and bottom 50% steadily falling

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

In 2022, 22.6% of the national income went to the top 1% of Indians. Cut to 1951, their share in the income was only 11.5% and even lower in the 1980s – just before India opened-up its economy – at 6%.

The share of the top 10% of Indians too had increased – from 36.7% of national income in 1951 to 57.7% in 2022.

On the other hand, the bottom 50% of Indians earned only 15% of the national income in 2022, compared with 20.6% in 1951. The middle 40% of Indians also recorded a sharp fall in their share of income from 42.8% to 27.3% in the period.

The gap between the rich and the poor has widened rapidly in the last two decades.

In 2022, the share of national income that went to the wealthiest 1% of Indians recorded a historic peak, higher than the levels seen in developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. These are some of the conclusions of the recently released 'Income and Wealth Inequality in India' report published by the World Inequality Lab.

Chart 1 shows the income group-wise share in national income, and the adult population in each bracket as of 2022-23. Close to one crore adults were in the top 1%, ten crore in the top 10%, 36 crore in the middle 40% and 46 crore were there in the bottom 50% of the income pyramid.

Notably, about 10,000 richest Indians – the top 0.001% of the income pyramid – earned 2.1% of the national income. The top 0.01% and top 0.1% earned 4.3% and 9.6% of the national income respectively.

While income disparity has always existed in India, like in other economies, it was only in recent years, that the gap widened at a reckless pace **(Chart 2)**.

To start with, in the 1950s and 60s, the income-gap between the top 10% and the middle 40%, was negligible, across most years.

In the 1980s, even the bottom 50%'s share in national income increased marginally, to bridge the gap.

But post-liberalisation, in the 1990s, the income share of the top 10% skyrocketed, with the other two group's share recording a steady fall. The curves continued on the same path in the 2000s and by the start of the 2010s, they settled and have hardly moved thereafter.

As for the top 1% of the population, their share in the national income in 2022 was higher than that of the richest 1% during colonial rule.

The top 1% earned an average of ₹53 lakh per year, 23 times more than the average Indian who earned ₹2.3 lakh, in 2022-23. The average income of the bottom 50% and the middle 40% stood at ₹71,000 and ₹1.65 lakh, respectively, in the same period.

Chart 3 shows the richest 1% of Indians' share in the national income. Just before independence, in the 1930s, the top 1%'s share of national income crossed the 20% mark. But after independence, with the princely States getting merged with Independent India, the share of the top 1% steadily declined, reaching close to the 6% mark in the 1980s.

However, post-liberalisation, their income share surged again and is presently hovering around the 22.5% mark, much higher than their share under British-rule.

Data shows that, while India's income levels are not growing as fast as other comparable economies, their top 1%'s share in national income is higher than even advanced countries. In 2022-23, the income shares of India's top 1% were above the levels recorded in the U.S., China, France, the U.K. and Brazil **(Chart 4)**. Whereas, China and Vietnam's average incomes grew at a much faster pace than India's **(Chart 5)**.

Mind the income gap

The data for the charts were sourced from the report titled, 'Income and Wealth Inequality in India' published by the World Inequality Lab. According to the report, the gap between the rich and the poor has widened rapidly in the last two decades

Chart 1: The chart shows the income group-wise share in national income, and the adult population in each bracket as of 2022-23

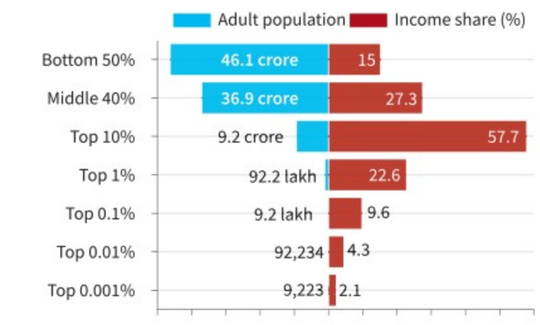


Chart 2: The chart shows the year-wise share of national income for the top 10%, bottom 50% and that middle 40% of the population

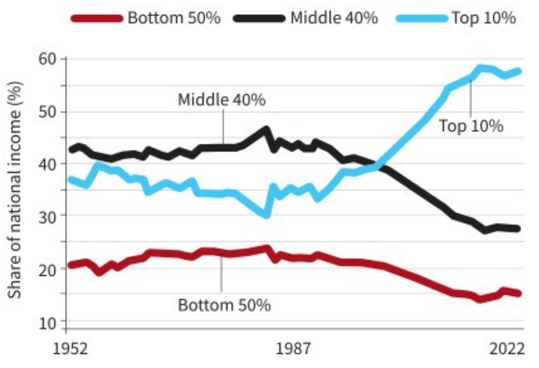


Chart 3: The chart shows the year-wise richest 1% Indians' share in the national income

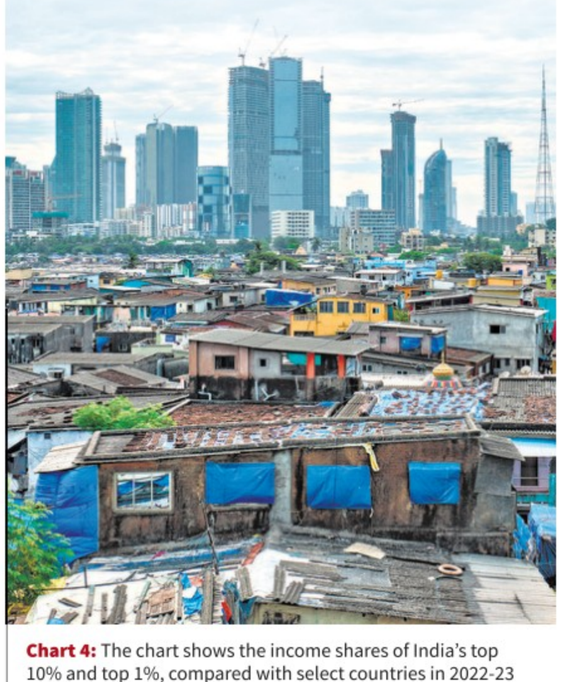


Chart 4: The chart shows the income shares of India's top 10% and top 1%, compared with select countries in 2022-23

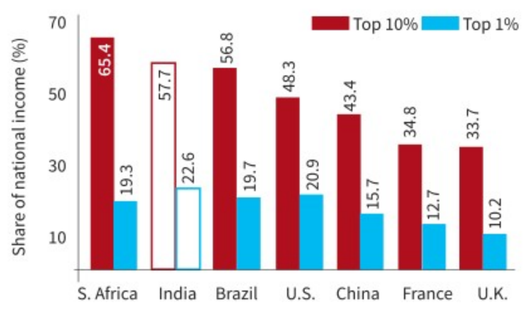
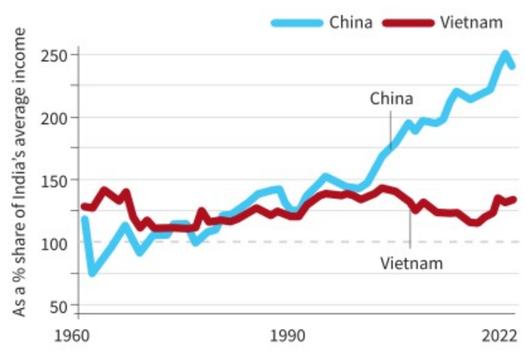


Chart 5: The chart shows the year-wise average income in China and Vietnam as a % share of India's average income



FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 21, 1974

Ugandan Asians' entry into United Kingdom

London, March 20: Uganda Asian husbands, separated from their families during the Uganda expulsions in August 1972, can rejoin their wives in Britain, the Home Secretary, Mr. Roy Jenkins told the House of Commons yesterday.

Young Ugandan Asians over 21, who were or had very recently been studying overseas, would also be allowed to join a parent holding a British passport, Mr. Jenkins said.

There may be about 300 husbands of British Asian women of Uganda stranded in India. Many of these women here have been living on welfare benefits and in poor accommodation in London and Leicester.

There is considerable pressure on British Asians in Kenya to leave the country. Stories about the rampant inflation here and the tough working and living conditions certainly discouraged many British Asians from settling in Britain.

In Tanzania, there could be less than 10,000 British Asians, although British authorities talk in terms of 20,000. There are British Asians in Malawi and Zambia too, numbering less than 20,000.

Hence the total number of British Asians in east and central Africa could be less than 50,000. Of them, a large number would opt for India, Canada or Australia. If the authorities here were to have a fresh look at the issue of British Asians in Africa, they will find that it is not a problem anymore.

It remains to be seen what will be the Wilson government's attitude, but with Mr. Jenkins as Home Secretary, one can at least expect a humane approach. It should be noted that a Labour government was instrumental in putting restrictions on the entry of British Asians into Britain.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 21, 1924

Afghan Arms.

Delhi, March 20: It is understood that His Majesty's government have now consented to the release of rifles and machine guns and ammunition for Kabul which had hitherto been detained in Bombay.

Col. Humphrys, a British Minister, who had been on a visit to Delhi, returned to Afghanistan yesterday.

From Page One

Govt. defends selection of new ECs before polls

"The independence of the Election Commission, or any other organisation or authority, does not arise from and is not attributable to the presence of a judicial member in the selection committee. Likewise, the presence of senior government functionaries on the selection committee cannot in and of itself be a ground to automatically assume bias on behalf of the committee," the government argued.

The government said that the inclusion of the Chief Justice as a member of the selection panel was just a stop-gap arrangement, meant to last only till Parliament made a law on EC appointments.

It said that the accusations made against the recent appointments to the EC were plain "malicious", pointing out that the two vacancies had to be filled in order to announce the schedule for the Lok Sabha election within time. The Commissioners were appointed on March 14, and took charge on March 15; the election schedule was then announced on March 16.

The Centre said that it would not have been "humanly possible" for Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar to solely steer the "world's biggest electoral exercise", with voting scheduled to begin on April 19. Noting that there were no allegations against Mr. Sandhu or Mr. Kumar, the government claimed that attempts were on to stir a political controversy based on pernicious statements about certain vague and unspecified motives behind the appointments.

The sharply-worded affidavit also countered statements made by Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, leader of the single largest party in the Opposition, and a member of the high-level selection committee. The Congress leader had claimed that he was kept in the dark about the details of candidates under consideration for the two EC positions. The Centre said that the profiles of the eligible persons were shared with him on March 13, and explained that the deliberations of the committee were of a collaborative nature, with discussions taking place during the actual meeting itself.

PM speaks to Putin, Zelenskyy, calls for dialogue, diplomacy to end war

Modi speaks to the Russian President to congratulate him on his victory in the recent election; he follows it up with a call to the Ukrainian President to reiterate India's commitment to do everything within its means to support a peaceful solution

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and called for an "early end to the ongoing conflict".

Mr. Modi first called Mr. Putin to congratulate him on his victory in the recent election and followed it up with a call to Mr. Zelenskyy and reiterated India's commitment to "do everything within its means to support a peaceful solution".

Mr. Zelenskyy has called upon India to participate in the inaugural Peace Summit in Switzerland.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba is also expected to visit India later this month.

"An exchange of views was also held on a number of issues on the international agenda, in particular in the context of the situation around Ukraine. The mood to further coordination between India in multilateral formats, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS was confirmed," the Russian statement said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Russian President Vladimir Putin, in this file photo. ANI

"Both sides noted with satisfaction that mutually beneficial ties in the trade, economic and investment fields, in the fields of energy and transport are progressively and dynamically developing in line with a particularly privileged strategic partnership," it added.

A statement from the Indian side added, "While discussing the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the PM reiterated India's consistent position in favour of dialogue and diplomacy as the way forward."

Mr. Modi, in a statement on X, said, "Had a good conversation with President Zelenskyy on strengthening the India-Ukraine partnership. Conveyed India's consistent support for all efforts for peace and bringing an early end to the ongoing conflict. India will continue to provide humanitarian assistance guided by our people-centric approach."

In his remarks, Mr. Zelenskyy said on X, "It will be important for us to see India attend the inaugural Peace Summit, which is currently being prepared in Switzerland. We discussed the development of our bilateral relations, which should include a meeting of our teams and a session of the intergovernmental commission on cooperation in New Delhi in the nearest future."

Earlier, *The Hindu* had reported, citing diplomatic sources, that Mr. Kuleba is planning a visit to Delhi by the end of this month.

India has maintained a neutral position on the war itself but has intensified trade, especially energy ties, with Russia against the backdrop of the war that started in February 2022. This relation had drawn criticism from Mr. Kuleba in 2022.

Last week, National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval held a telephone conversation with Andriy Yermak, head of the office of the Ukrainian President.

After the Modi-Zelenskyy conversation, the External Affairs Ministry, in a statement, said, "While discussing the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, the PM reiterated India's people-centric approach and called for dialogue and diplomacy as the way forward. He highlighted that India supports all efforts for an early and peaceful resolution of all issues between the Parties. He added that India would continue to do everything within its means to support a peaceful solution."

Mr. Zelenskyy has not visited India since the war broke out and Mr. Putin too cancelled travelling for the G-20 summit held here in September 2023 but Mr. Modi met Mr. Zelenskyy in Hiroshima during the last G-7 summit. Mr. Jaishankar visited Moscow in the last week of December 2023 when he met Mr. Putin. During that meeting, Mr. Putin extended an invite to Mr. Modi to visit Moscow.

Ukrainian sources have not revealed the details of Mr. Kuleba's planned visit so far, but there are indications that the visit will be aimed at activating a channel of communication with the goal to ensure dialogue over the stalemate in Ukraine. The coming months are expected to provide the Indian side to play a more active role in this case as Russia is the chair of BRICS this year and will host Indian interlocutors on multiple occasions when the events related to the BRICS will be hosted in various Russian cities.

Jharkhand HC stays arrest warrant against Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
RANCHI

The Jharkhand High Court on Wednesday granted stay on a non-bailable arrest warrant issued against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi by a court in Chaibasa in a 2018 defamation case.

On February 27, the MP-MLA court of Chaibasa district had issued the warrant against Mr. Gandhi, and on March 14, the court had directed the Congress leader to be physically present in court, refusing his petition to make his appearance through a pleader.

Mr. Gandhi had filed a petition in the High Court against the warrant. During the hearing on Wednesday, Justice Rajesh Kumar postponed the warrant for one month and directed him to take legal steps before facing the trial.

Pratap Katiyar, a resident of Chaibasa, had filed a complaint against Mr. Gandhi and alleged that he had made derogatory remarks against former BJP chief Amit Shah at the Congress convention in 2018.

The Congress leader had said that no murderer can become the national president of the Congress and that such a thing was only possible in the BJP.

SC grants bail to ED officer Ankit Tiwari

The ED had said that the case against Mr. Tiwari, a Union government employee, ought to be investigated by a Central agency like the CBI, and not the DVAC.

On January 25, the top court had stayed both DVAC and the ED from probing the case against Mr. Tiwari.

In the previous hearing, on March 11, the Bench had proposed to examine the question whether an offence committed by a Central government by misusing his official capacity be investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation or by the State in whose jurisdiction the alleged offence happened.

Mr. Sibal had argued that States could prosecute central officials in such cases. "How is it possible that States cannot prosecute just because the official concerned is a central government employee? Will the central employee get immunity?" Mr. Sibal asked.

Additional Solicitor-General S.V. Raju had said the State, using the case against Mr. Tiwari as a ruse, was "ransacking" ED offices and taking away documents crucial to an ongoing high-profile investigation into illegal sand mining. "Our investigation in that case (sand mining) involves several high-ranking Ministers," Mr. Raju had submitted.

Mr. Sibal had countered that the ED's actions against its officers, including the summoning of five District Collectors in the sand mining case, was leading to "policy paralysis" in the State.

The court agreed to hear both sides in detail.

Don't use counselling to turn LGBTQ persons against their identity, says SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has cautioned judges against using the court-ordered counselling of members of the LGBTQ+ community as a way to turn them against their own identity and sexual orientation. In such cases, they are often in distress or have been separated from their partners by their own relatives, it observed.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said that ascertaining the wishes of a person is one thing; however, it would be inappropriate to attempt to overcome the identity and sexual orientation of an individual through a process of counselling.

"Judges must eschew the tendency to substitute their own subjective values

for the values which are protected by the Constitution," the Chief Justice observed, in a judgment published on Wednesday.

The verdict laid out a series of guidelines for courts to follow while dealing with *habeas corpus* petitions and pleas for protection from family or police interference filed by members of the LGBTQ+ community. "The judges must showcase sincere empathy and compassion for the case of the detained or missing person. Social morality laden with homophobic or transphobic views or any personal predilection of the judge or sympathy for the natal family must be eschewed. The court must ensure that the law is followed in ascertaining the free will of the detained or missing person," the court directed.

The verdict came in a petition filed by a Kerala-based woman, represented by advocates Sriram Parakkat and Luke J. Chirayil, who had filed a *habeas corpus* petition to know the whereabouts of her same-sex partner. The Kerala High Court had ordered the partner, found to be with her parents, to be counselled. Following this, the High Court had a woman judicial officer interact with her. The final report was that the partner did not want to live with the petitioner and looked ahead to a career.

The petitioner had appealed to the Supreme Court, which refused to intervene. However, Mr. Parakkat raised an apprehension that the counselling ordered by High Courts would become a means to push a person against his or her sexual orientation or chosen partner. "The concept of 'family' is not limited to natal family but also encompasses a person's chosen family. This is true for all persons. However, it has gained heightened significance for LGBTQ+ persons on account of the violence and lack of safety that they may experience at the hands of their natal family. When faced with humiliation, indignity, and even violence, people look to their partner and friends who become their chosen family. These chosen families often outlast natal families," the Chief Justice observed.

Modi cancels visit to Bhutan due to inclement weather

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

A day ahead of his planned departure, Prime Minister Narendra Modi put off his visit to Bhutan due to "inclement weather", an announcement made simultaneously by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Bhutanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Wednesday. The visit is being rescheduled, although no dates were given. With heavy rain and possible snowfall in Paro predicted to continue on Thursday, officials said the visit had to be postponed.

"Due to ongoing inclement weather conditions over Paro airport, it has been decided to postpone the visit of the Prime Minister to Bhutan on March 21 and 22, 2024. New dates are being worked out by the two sides through diplomatic channels," the statements said.

Officials said the final decision was taken given Paro airport's particularly tricky "visual landing" requirements in the mountainous region, and impaired line of sight due to incessant rain, making the PM's flight risky.

Officials said preparations had been completed for visit before the unforeseen weather conditions. The itinerary had included a ceremonial welcome for Mr. Modi at the Tashichhodzong complex, an audience and a royal banquet hosted by the Bhutanese King on Thursday, followed by the inauguration of a 'Mother and Child Hospital' supported by Indian development funding.

Murmu gives additional charge to Kiren Rijiju

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday gave additional charge of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries to Union Minister Kiren Rijiju, after accepting the resignation of Pashupati Kumar Paras.

Mr. Paras resigned on Tuesday after his Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party did not find a place in the seat-sharing arrangement in Bihar for the Lok Sabha election.

"As advised by the Prime Minister, the President has directed that Shri Kiren Rijiju, Cabinet Minister, be assigned the charge of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, in addition to his existing portfolio," a press communique from the Rashtrapati Bhavan said.

Modi govt. nurtured a 'billionaire raj' more unequal than British Raj: Cong.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Citing a global report that shows inequality in India had widened, with the share of the top 1% population in national income at historically high levels in 2023, the Congress on Wednesday criticised the Narendra Modi government's policies for nurturing a "billionaire raj" more unequal than even the 'British Raj'.

As per a study published by The World Inequality Lab on Monday titled 'Income and Wealth Inequality in India: The Rise of The Billionaire Raj', India's richest 1% people have a 22.6% share of national income, the highest in over a century, while the bottom 50% of the population have a 15% share. The study also said wealth inequality is near historic highs.

Jairam Ramesh

Alleging that Mr. Modi nurtured this 'billionaire raj' to "favour his friends and fund his party's campaigns", Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the rise of top-end inequality had been particularly pronounced between 2014 and 2023. "The Modi sarkar's policies have directly caused this perverse growth through three methods: enrich the rich, impoverish the poor and hide the data," Mr. Ramesh said in a statement.

Mr. Ramesh said most government contracts are handed out to a chosen few corporates even as public assets are being sold to the same corporates at record discounts. "Now we also know that many of these companies have been donating large amounts to the ruling party under the *chanda do, dhanda lo* [donate to the party to gain business] scheme," he said, referring to the electoral bonds scheme now abolished by the Supreme Court.

"Demonetisation, the unplanned GST rollout, and the attempted and implemented changes to environmental, land acquisition, farm, and labour laws have all been done to support the 'billionaire raj'", he said. The emergence of five big conglomerates, including the Adani Group, who are building monopolies in 40 sectors, has caused India's current inflation, he pointed out. "The combination of rising prices and an unemployment crisis has caused the common man's real wages to stagnate," the Congress communications cell chief said.

'Data suppressed'

Noting that the report, co-authored by inequality expert and French scholar Thomas Piketty, flags the quality of economic data as "notably poor" in India, Mr. Ramesh said the Congress had consistently highlighted this.

"The government failed' to conduct the 2021 Population Census, refused to publish the 2011 Socio Economic Caste Census, manipulated GDP figures, and suppressed inconvenient data like the National Sample Survey 2017-18, which showed an unprecedented decline in rural consumption expenditure," he said.

Indian govt. probe found 'rogue operatives' involved in plot to kill Pannun, says media report

The Hindu Bureau

An Indian government investigation into the alleged plot to kill Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in New York City has found that "rogue operatives", not authorised by the government, were involved, Bloomberg reported on Wednesday.

Federal prosecutors in the U.S. had, in November, accused an Indian citizen, Nikhil Gupta, of plotting to kill Pannun at the behest of an Indian government official.

At least one of the individuals involved in the alleged murder-for-hire plot to kill Pannun no longer works with the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), according to the Bloomberg report, which attributed the information to unnamed "senior officials" familiar with the issue.

The person concerned is, however, still employed by the government and no criminal action has been initiated against him, the report says.

Donald Lu, the U.S. State Department's top diplomat for South and Central Asia, told U.S. lawmakers on Wednesday that the alleged plot to kill Pannun was "a serious issue" between the two countries and that the Biden administration was taking the issue "incredibly seriously".

Mr. Lu was speaking at a hearing on 'Pakistan After the Elections' organised by a sub-committee of the powerful U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee.

He was asked by the body's Ranking Member (i.e. a Democrat) Dean Phillips about the "alarming allegations" of Indian government involvement in the plot to kill a "Sikh American, here, on American soil".

Mr. Lu's comments did not appear to reflect the latest reporting around the investigation into the alleged plot as he made no reference to this, saying instead that the U.S. has asked India to work "quickly and transparently" as the investigation proceeds.

"We are at the moment working with India to encourage India to hold accountable those responsible for this terrible crime," Mr. Lu said.

Indian authorities have informed the U.S. government about the outcome of the probe, according to the Bloomberg report.

Nomination process for first phase of LS election begins

Polling will be held for 102 seats in 21 States and Union Territories on April 19; in Tamil Nadu, all 39 seats will go to the polls; last date of filing nomination papers is March 27; for Bihar, it is March 28

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Election duty: A security personnel stands guard near a large model of an electronic voting machine (EVM) installed outside the Election Commission office in New Delhi on Wednesday. AP

The nomination process for the first phase of the Lok Sabha election began on Wednesday, with the issuance of a notification by the Election Commission.

A total of 102 seats in 21 States and Union Territories will go to the polls in the first phase on April 19.

Polling will be held in Arunachal Pradesh (two seats), Assam (five), Bihar (four), Chhattisgarh (one), Madhya Pradesh (six), Maharashtra (five), Manipur (two), Meghalaya (two), Mizoram (one), Nagaland (one), Rajasthan (12), Sikkim (one), Tamil Nadu (39), Tripura (one), Uttar Pradesh (eight), Uttarakhand (five), West Bengal (three), Andaman and Nicobar (one), Jammu and Kashmir (one), Lakshadweep (one), and Puducherry (one).

The last date for filing nomination papers is March 27. However, in Bihar, it is March 28 due to a festival.

The nomination papers will be scrutinised on March 28. For Bihar, it will be done on March 30. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is March 20, while for Bihar, it is April 2.

The election for the 18th Lok Sabha will be held in seven phases beginning April 19 followed by subsequent phases on April 26, May 7, May 13, May 20, May 25 and June 1. The counting of votes is on June 4. The term of the 17th Lok Sabha ends on June 16.

The election will be held over 44 days, making it the second-longest election period in India. The longest is the first Lok Sabha election that spanned five months from September 1951 to February 1952.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third straight term for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), banking on his government's performance for the past 10 years.

The Opposition Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) on the other hand has targeted the government over joblessless, price rise, farmers' woes, and so on.

Remove political ads from public spaces: EC to Centre, States

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Wednesday asked both the Union and State governments to remove all unauthorised political advertisements, such as posters, wall writings, hoardings and banners, from public spaces like railway stations, bus stands and airports.

In a letter to the Cabinet Secretary as well as Chief Secretaries of all States, the Commission sought a compliance report in the matter by 5 p.m. on Thursday.

The letter said the Commission had been receiving complaints from various quarters alleging that unauthorised political advertisements were still being displayed in many places, despite its earlier order to remove them.

Sources said the latest direction was being given following a complaint made by the Congress.

With the announcement of schedule for the Lok Sabha election on March 16, the Model Code of Conduct has kicked in. In a letter to all States and Union Territories on the same day, the poll body asked them to ensure strict compliance of its instructions regarding removal of political advertisements from government, public and private property.

"All unauthorised political advertisements, in the form of wall writings, posters, papers or defacement in any other form, cutouts, hoardings, banner flags, etc., were ordered to be removed in a time-bound manner from public spaces like railway stations, bus stands, airports, roadways, government buses, electric or telephone poles, municipal or local bodies' building, etc., and a strict compliance in this was to be ensured," its said in its letter on Wednesday.

"The Commission has taken a serious note of the non-compliance or partial compliance of its instructions and hereby directs all State and UT governments to immediately remove all unauthorised political advertisements".

INBRIEF

HC dismisses plea for taking action against Rahul, Akhilesh

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday declined to entertain a plea seeking directions to the Centre to act against political leaders Rahul Gandhi, Arvind Kejriwal and Akhilesh Yadav for allegedly making false and misleading statements intending to damage the image and credibility of the country. "If the industrialists are aggrieved or the politicians are aggrieved, they will take action. Don't underestimate the mind of the voter. They are very very smart. They know who is speaking the truth and who is not. Don't involve us in this. Don't underestimate the wisdom of Indian voters," the High Court said.

Ex-officers, MLA join ruling SKM in poll-bound Sikkim

A couple of retired bureaucrats and former leaders of the rival Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) joined the ruling Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) at an event in West Sikkim district's Dentam on Wednesday. The SKM is a constituent of the BJP-led NDA. Elections to the 32-member Sikkim Assembly and the lone Lok Sabha constituency in the Himalayan State are scheduled on April 19. Those who joined the SKM in the presence of Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang included former Sports and Youth Affairs Secretary Raju Basnett, former Rural Development Secretary Chewang Gyatso Bhutia, and former MLA Gopal Baraily.

Centre using its full might to defeat us like in 1977: Omar

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said New Delhi was using its full might to defeat his party while drawing parallels with the 1977 elections in the erstwhile State. Terming the current political scenario similar to that of 1977, Mr. Abdullah, National Conference Vice President, said: "In 1977 too, the Janata Party was joined by local parties and religious leaders to defeat us. The results are before us. Let the A team and the B team [of the BJP] join hands. We are prepared for this test. We are ready for the elections." He accused New Delhi of "using its full might to defeat the NC" in the upcoming election.

SP names candidates for six U.P. seats, including Pilibhit

The Samajwadi Party (SP) on Wednesday declared six of its candidates from Uttar Pradesh for the upcoming parliamentary polls. The SP announced the candidature of Zia Ur Rehman Barq from Sambhal, Manoj Chaudhary from Baghpat, Rahul Awana from Gautam Buddh Nagar, Rajeev Rai from Ghosi, Rajendra S. Bind from Mirzapur and Bhagwat Sharan Gangwar from Pilibhit. The announcement holds significance as the Pilibhit candidate's name doused rumours of sitting BJP Lok Sabha MP Varun Gandhi likely getting a ticket in case the ruling party denies him one. "We will sweep the state. The BJP's days in power are numbered..." an SP spokesperson said.

'Only Trinamool is cracking the whip on corrupt leaders'

Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Wednesday said that only the Trinamool was taking action against party leaders involved in corruption. He stoutly defended West Bengal's ruling party against the charges of corruption that it has been facing. The party has been put in a difficult spot after the recent collapse of a high rise in Kolkata that claimed 10 lives. "Partha Chatterjee and Jyoti Priya Mullick were removed from ministerial positions. No other party but the Trinamool Congress has taken action in such matters. CPI(M) was in power for 34 years. Did they take action against their leaders? BJP is in power in around 17 states – have they taken action against their leaders anywhere?" said Mr. Banerjee while addressing a public meeting at Basirhat.

Pappu Yadav, Danish Ali formally inducted into Congress party

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Former five-time MP from Bihar, Pappu Yadav; sitting Lok Sabha member Danish Ali, who had been suspended by Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and former Lok Sabha member from Jammu, Chowdhary Lal Singh along with BJP MLA from Jharkhand, Jai Prakash Bhai Patel, were among the new entrants to the Congress on Wednesday.

The joining of each leader was announced by organising separate press conferences, in the presence of the respective Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chiefs and All India Congress Committee (AICC) incharges, to dispel the notion that people are only leaving the party.

"A sitting BJP MP from Haryana recently joined, followed by a sitting BJP MP from Rajasthan. You will see many more people joining in the days to come as they realise that the Congress is the only hope," chairman of Congress' publicity wing, Pawan Khera, said.

Separately, incumbent Lok Sabha member from Assam and Congress leader Abdul Khaleque, who had resigned after being denied a ticket to contest from Barpeta seat, took back his resignation after meeting party president Mallikarjun Kharge.

Among the new recruits is Mr. Singh, a two-term former Congress MP who joined the BJP in 2014.

Mr. Singh had formed the Dogra Swabhiman Sangathan Party (DSSP) after severing ties with the BJP, and merged his outfit too with the Congress. The 65-year-old leader, who is from Kathua district, could be fielded against Union Minister Jitendra Singh from Udhampur parliamentary constituency

The induction of Mr. Yadav, whose wife Ranjeet Ranjan is a Rajya Sabha MP and a senior Congress leader, is aimed at bolstering the party's chances in the Seemanchal region of Bihar. Mr. Yadav also formally merged his Jan Adhikar Party with the Congress after his induction at the AICC headquarters.

Accompanied by his son Sarthak Ranjan and other party leaders, Mr. Yadav said he was joining the party's fight against "dictatorship" in the country.

Mr. Ali, the MP from Amroha in Uttar Pradesh, had earlier met Ms. Gandhi and is likely to contest the parliamentary election from the same constituency on Congress ticket.

Close watch

Under the scanner: As the Model Code of Conduct is in force, CISF personnel along with Andhra Pradesh police check vehicles at Prakasam Barrage in Vijayawada on Wednesday. The State will vote for both the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections on May 13. K.V.S GIRI

Congress poll panel clears name of Sushil Shinde's daughter for Solapur

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

MVA allies would be meeting today after which a seat-sharing arrangement could be announced

The Central Election Committee (CEC) of the Congress on Wednesday is believed to have cleared the names of 12 candidates from Maharashtra for the upcoming Lok Sabha election, including Praniti Shinde from Solapur, daughter of former Union Home Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde.

The Congress is yet to announce its formal seat sharing arrangement with the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena and Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party as part of their Maha Vikas Aghadi bloc.

On Thursday, the MVA allies would be meeting, following which the seat-sharing arrangement could be formally announced. The party is likely to release its third list very soon, said sources.

The panel has also cleared seven names each from Gujarat and Rajasthan. Former Leader of the Opposition in the Gujarat Assembly, Paresh Dhanaji, could be fielded from the Rajkot Lok Sabha seat in Gujarat, where the Congress is contesting the polls in alliance with the Aam Aadmi Party.

In Rajasthan, Sunil Sharma's name has been cleared for Jaipur city seat while Kuldeep Indira would be fielded from Ganganagar.

The election panel will meet again on Thursday to discuss candidates for the Lok Sabha seats from States which are set to vote in the first phase of the election.

RJD entrusts Lalu Prasad to take final call on candidates for Lok Sabha poll

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

At Rashtriya Janata Dal's (RJD) parliamentary board meeting on Wednesday, party chief Lalu Prasad was authorised to take the final call on selection of party candidates for the Lok Sabha election and to also explore possibilities of tie-ups with other like-minded parties.

He was also given powers to finalise seat-sharing arrangements with coalition partners in Bihar. A meeting between Mr. Prasad and Nawada jailbreak case convict Ashok Mahto on Wednesday too led to speculations of a possible candidature of the latter's wife.

"In our party's parliamentary board meeting, a one-line proposal was moved authorising party president Lalu Prasad Yadav to decide on selection of candidates, to explore possibilities of tie-ups with other like-minded parties, and to finalise seat sharing arrangement with coalition partners in the State," RJD MLC and the party's national vice-president Abdul Bari Siddiqui told media persons after the meeting in Patna.

Asked if there was any discussion on bringing disgruntled National Democratic Alliance (NDA) ally Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party (RLJP) of Pashupati Kumar Paras and Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) of Mukesh Sahni into the RJD-led *Mahagathbandhan* fold, Mr. Siddiqui curtly replied: "No discussion took place."

In less than a month, the four Lok Sabha constituencies in Bihar that would go to the polls in the first phase on April 19 are Aurangabad, Nawada, Gaya and Jamui. Among the NDA alliance partners, the BJP has announced that it will stand in Aurangabad and Nawada, while ally Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) would contest from Jamui (reserved) seat. Gaya has been given to another ally Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular).

Late on Tuesday, Jan Adhikar Party (JAP) chief Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav had called on Mr. Prasad and his younger son Tejashwi Yadav apparently to seek their "approval" for his party's merger with the Congress. Mr. Pappu Yadav's JAP merged with the Congress on Wednesday in Delhi.

Apna Dal faction to contest in 3 seats, SP says 'unilateral' move

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

The Apna Dal (Kamerawadi) led by Krishna Patel, a Samajwadi Party (SP) ally, on Wednesday announced its decision to contest the Phulpur, Mirzapur, and Kaushambi Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh under the umbrella of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA).

"A meeting of the Apna Dal (Kamerawadi) Central Executive Committee was held under the chairmanship of the national president Krishna Patel. The committee decided to contest three seats - Phulpur, Mirzapur, and Kaushambi - as part of the INDIA bloc, in Uttar Pradesh," the party said in a press release.

The SP, a key constituent of the INDIA bloc, called the announcement unilateral. "I don't think they [Apna Dal] talked either with the Congress or us [SP] in the INDIA bloc before announcing the seats. It is a unilateral decision," SP national spokesperson Sunil Singh Yadav said.

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Sd/- MANAGING DIRECTOR

INBRIEF

Hundreds rally in support of activist Wangchuk in Kargil

Ladakh's Kargil town observed a shutdown and hundreds of locals came out in support of activist Sonam Wangchuk, whose climate-related fast in sub-zero temperature and under the open skies entered the 15th day on Wednesday, in a bid to press the Centre to grant Statehood and Sixth Schedule status to the four-year-old Union Territory. The half-day shutdown call was issued by the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), an amalgam of politico-religious groups of the district. "It's our right to demand the restoration of democracy. We reject UT setup. The Centre will have to grant Statehood and Sixth Schedule [status] to Ladakh," Sajjad Kargili, a KDA member, said.

High Court expunges remarks by judge hailing Adityanath

Calling it "unwarranted expressions containing political overtones and personal views", the Allahabad High Court has expunged a remark recently made by a judge hailing Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. While expunging the remark by Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ), Bareilly, Ravi Kumar Diwakar, the Bench of Justice Ram Manohar Narayan Mishra observed that it is not expected from the judicial officer to express his personal or preconceived notions in a judicial order. Hailing Mr. Adityanath as a 'philosopher king', the Bareilly ASJ noted that when a religious person is in the seat of power, there are good results.

CA inter, final exam dates rescheduled in view of polls

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has rescheduled its exam dates in view of the Lok Sabha elections, according to officials. While the chartered accountant exams will be conducted in the month of May, as decided earlier, the dates have been rejigged. According to the revised schedule, the intermediate course exam for Group 1 will be held on May 3, 5, and 9, and for Group 2 on May 11, 15, and 17. For the final exams, the ICAI has announced May 2, 4, and 8 for Group 1 and May 10, 14, and 16 for Group 2. "It may further be noted that there would be no change in the examination," the ICAI said. PTI

Jaggi Vasudev undergoes emergency brain surgery

Spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev underwent an emergency brain surgery at a private hospital in New Delhi after suffering a "life-threatening" bleeding in the skull and is now recovering well, a senior doctor said on Wednesday. "The surgery was carried out on March 17 to remove bleeding in the skull. Sadhguru was weaned off the ventilator post surgery," a statement from Indraprastha Apollo Hospital said, adding he has shown "steady progress" and his "vital parameters have improved". Sadhguru also posted a video on his Instagram account. Prime Minister Narendra Modi wished him a speedy recovery. PTI

Centre notifies fact check unit to screen online content

Under the IT Rules, 2021, social media platforms could lose the legal liability protections they enjoy for content posted by users, if they choose to keep the 'misinformation' flagged by the unit

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Weeks ahead of the election, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology on Wednesday notified the Press Information Bureau's Fact Check Unit as the designated body to flag misinformation about Central government departments to social media platforms.

Under the IT Rules, 2021, social media platforms could lose the legal liability protections they enjoy for content posted by users, if they choose to keep notified misinformation available online.

Given the contentiousness of the idea, the Union government had held off on formally notifying the Fact Check Unit as litigation was under way at the Bombay High Court challenging the provision. This month, however, the court declined to extend an interim stay that had prohibited the government from enforcing the rules.

The unit will serve as the nodal agency to tackle 'fake news' related to the government.

The PIB Fact Check Unit has come under close scrutiny in the past, as it has sometimes disputed journalists' work by relying on denials from the Ministries they have written about.

'Threat to free press'

The Editors' Guild of India and comedian Kunal Kamra, who have challenged the IT Rules more broadly, on Wednesday approached the Supreme Court on the matter.

"This [provision] could seriously threaten the independence of the free press on the Indian internet," the Internet Freedom Foundation said last September on the IT Rules amendment that empowered the Fact Check Unit to be the arbiter of what information on the Union government was incorrect.

The Fact Check Unit has in the past used its megaphone to dispute news reporting. Last week, the PIB Fact Check Unit declared that an Al Jazeera article calling the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 "anti-Muslim," was "fake". It then went on to present rejoinders to claims that the article never made in the first place.

The Fact Check Unit is run by three Joint Director rank officers of the Indian Information Service, which is tasked with managing the government's publicity operations. "The unit reports to the Principal Director General, PIB who functions as the Principal Spokesperson of the Government of India," the PIB says on its website.

CCI dismisses pleas against Google's new Play Store fee policy

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Fair trade regulator Competition Commission of India on Wednesday dismissed four petitions of Indian app companies filed against Google's new Play Store billing policy to levy an 11% to 26% charge on in-app payments.

Indian-origin app firms alleged that Google's Play Store payment policies are anti-competitive. However, the CCI made clear that nothing stated in this order shall be tantamount to a final expression of opinion on the merits of the case, and the Director General will conduct the investigation without being swayed in any manner whatsoever by the observations made herein.

"The commission is of the view that the informants have failed to meet the necessary criteria for grant of interim relief as propounded by the Supreme Court... The informants have not been able to project any higher level of *prima facie* case warranting a positive direction as sought by the informants at the interim stage," the CCI said in its order.

The complainants were Anupam Mittal's People Interactive India Pvt Ltd., Mebigo Labs, the Indian Broadcasting and Digital Foundation (IBDF), and the Indian Digital Media Industry Foundation (IDMIF). The petitions were asking the regulator to restrain Google from collecting any fee for transactions involving paid downloads or in-app purchases on apps offering digital products/ services.

Zomato scraps green uniforms for 'veg fleet'

Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI

After an uproar on social media over concerns of its concept possibly encouraging discrimination on the grounds of caste and religion, food delivery platform Zomato has decided to do away with the idea of dressing their newly-launched "pure veg fleet" in green uniforms.

Zomato CEO Deepinder Goyal said on social media platform X that the company would be going ahead with a separate delivery fleet for its upcoming "pure veg mode" but that both its regular and the "pure veg fleet" will be dressed in the same red. He added that the intent behind separating the fleets was to prevent the smell of spilt food from a rider's previous orders from carrying over to a subsequent vegetarian meal.

Shaik Salauddin, national general secretary of the Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers, said, "The question still remains how the selection of drivers for the separate 'pure veg fleet' will work on the ground and this has to be clarified."

BEML conducts test-firing of indigenous 1,500 HP engine for main battle tanks

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The maiden test-firing of India's first indigenously-made 1,500 horsepower (HP) engine for Main Battle Tanks was successfully conducted at Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) engine division in Mysuru complex on Wednesday in the presence of Union Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane.

Historic mark: Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane with senior officials of BEML in Mysuru on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Advanced technology

"The 1,500 HP engine represents a paradigm shift in military propulsion systems, possessing cutting-edge features such as high power-to-weight ratio, operability in extreme conditions including high altitudes, sub-zero temperatures, and desert environments," the Defence Ministry said.

"Equipped with advanced technologies, the engine stands on par with the most advanced engines globally."

Inaugurating the test cell, the Defence Secretary described the achievement as a transformative moment which will enhance the capabilities of the armed forces. Elaborating on the developmental cycle, the Ministry said that the project, initiated in August 2020, has been meticulously structured into five major milestones, ensuring timely completion and adherence to quality standards.

Govt. seeks report on IVF availed by Moosewala's mother

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has sought a report from the Government of Punjab on the in-vitro fertilization (IVF) treatment availed by the late Punjabi singer and rapper Sidhu Moosewala's mother Charan Kaur.

The notice said: "Under Section 21(g)(i) of the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021, the age limit prescribed for a woman going under ART Services is between 21-50 years."

Charan Kaur, 58, and Balkaur Sidhu, 60, lost their only child, Sidhu Moosewala, also known as Shubhdeep Singh Sidhu, 28, in May 2022 when he was shot dead in Mansa, Punjab. The late singer's mother earlier this month gave birth to a baby boy, the news of which was shared by his father in a post on social media platform Instagram.

While the Centre has sought a report on the assisted pregnancy, the birth has also sparked a debate on whether an age limit should be implemented in such cases as people are living longer and have better medical facilities to ensure a good quality of life.

Balkaur Sidhu, the father of the late Sidhu Moosewala, distributes sweets after the birth of his second child, in Bathinda. PTI

Archana Dhawan Bajaj, IVF expert, said that the age group of 25 to 35 years is the best time to conceive with 50 years being a reasonable age limit. "Ageing brings along various ailments, including blood pressure, diabetes, and heart diseases, and the child must have reasonable parental support time," Dr. Bajaj explained.

The debate is both medical and ethical, said Shelli Singh, senior gynaecologist, La Femme and Rosewalk Hospital, Delhi.

She added that while the age limit is reasonable, there are some exceptions as it is believed that every woman has the reproductive right to become a mother.

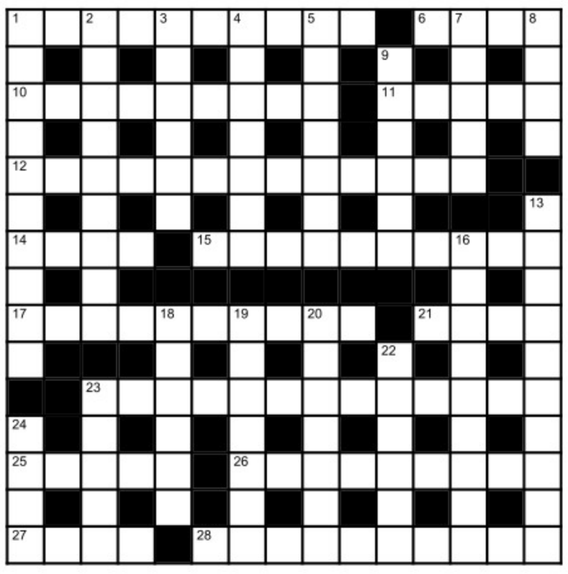
"In case a woman wishes to avail of ART services beyond this age, she must have a detailed medical and physical examination, including verification of good mental health. The couple must have insurance for the unborn child, and also clear-cut guidelines as to who will be the legal guardian of the child in case they die and are thus unable to take care of the child," Dr. Singh said.

TH CROSSWORD + 14128

(set by Afterdark)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 No diet, pie baked, consumed ten in a trip (10)
6 Headless chicken? No, some other birds (4)
10 Keep spirit in front of hearth (9)
11 Opposition leader managed to squander good agency (5)
12 Crowd caught ex-con ultimately with grip, but some cash missing (13)
14 Be back at base (4)
15 Closeness seen with female at new diner, small joint perhaps (10)
17 Say, killers' target? Ice innovatively with sulphur (10)
21 Toppers in Oxford really ace law exam (4)
23 Supportive of lower experience (13)
25 Stick with previous wife ultimately (5)
26 Marines touring California are perhaps Californians (9)
27 Cannot erase hidden message (4)
28 Following order and rule, collect papers in the latter half from 26, say (10)

Down

1 Icy niece working to overtake two females with skill (10)
2 Father let in girl for training (9)
3 Went down with investigator and public prosecutor on preliminary enquiry with director (6)
4 Vehicle found at lot near gate (7)
5 One does this in theatre at work time, time before excision primarily (7)
7 Try hacking network, buggy perhaps (5)
8 Gentleman from Kolkata gets director post (4)
9 Policeman gets a bomb reproduced (6)
13 A butcher loses pig over nothing and asks for forgiveness (10)
16 Speed up, nearly taking staff across island in cyclone (9)
18 Hills are cooler, perhaps, heading off close to plains (6)
19 Ran amok in commotion of storm (7)
20 To meet ex-Romeo travels faraway (7)
22 Friend in Gurgaon crushed by termination (6)
23 Agitation at state settled (5)
24 Wide ball held near fence (4)

SUDOKU

					2		4	7
	4				1		5	8
	6		7			9		
	2	1		9				
				5		2	9	
		4			9		8	
3	9		6				7	
5	8		3					

No.SS6104 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

	P		H			S		T		N	E
J	O	K	E	S		V	E	G	E	T	A	B	L	E
	L		R		H		A		R		T		V	
D	I	V	I	N	E		S	U	R	V	I	V	E	D
	C		T		A		I		I		O		S	
D	E	P	A	R	T	E	D		B	E	N	D		
	M		G				E		L				I	
R	E	V	E	R	S	E		S	E	A	T	I	N	G
	N					O		N				H		T
		P	O	O	L		A	N	S	W	E	R	E	D
	C		U		D		U		L		O		R	
H	A	U	N	T	I	N	G		I	S	R	A	E	L
	R		C		E		H		T		I		S	
C	E	L	E	B	R	A	T	E		T	E	N	T	S
	S		S		S		Y				S		S	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

5	4	7	1	8	3	6	9	2
8	2	1	5	6	9	7	4	3
6	3	9	2	4	7	8	5	1
9	1	4	8	3	6	2	7	5
7	6	2	4	1	5	9	3	8
3	8	5	9	7	2	1	6	4
4	5	6	7	2	1	3	8	9
1	7	8	3	9	4	5	2	6
2	9	3	6	5	8	4	1	7

FAITH

What Navroz signifies

The Zoroastrian calendar starts with Navroz on March 21, the spring equinox, when nature is in full bloom. The festivities of Navroz reflect the renewal of the earth that occurs with the coming of spring. On the ritual Navroz table (Sofreh Haft Seen), all aspects of creation come together in a sacred space: fire, water, fruit, grain, vinegar, plant and animal life represented by fish in a bowl, author Bakhtiar K. Dadhabhoy said in a lecture.

During Navroz, people observe a series of customs marked by the number seven, a number that denotes the seven Amesha Spentas, the seven divine entities emanating from Ahura Mazda, the highest divinity of the religion. The Navroz table has fire represented by a lamp, a mirror, a prayer book, a pomegranate, and seven items starting with the letter 'S' or 'Sh'. The most visual symbol of new life are the seeds planted in containers to sprout in time for the Navroz table. The items with 'sh' sound are: sherab (wine), sheer (milk), sherbet (sweetened drink), shagufeh (buds), shama (candle), shakar (sugar), and shaheed (honey). Items with 's' sound include samanu (pudding), seeb (apple), and sekkeh (coins). Guests are invited to look into the mirror with a smiling face for good luck in the new year. Navroz promotes peace and solidarity not only between families but also between communities.

INBRIEF

TVS Motor names Sanmar's Vijay Sankar as a Director

TVS Motor Company (TVSM) on Wednesday announced the induction of Sanmar Group Chairman Vijay Sankar and Haribhakti & Associates Chairman Shailesh Haribhakti as independent directors, subject to shareholder approval. Independent director Kuok Meng Xiong will step down at the ensuing AGM, owing to his increased business commitments and personal reasons, the two- and three-wheeler manufacturer said in a statement.

NCLAT tells PSBs not to take coercive action against IL&FS

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has directed 11 public sector lenders not to take coercive action against IL&FS and its group companies till its next hearing on May 14. A two-member NCLAT bench also issued notices to the banks, along with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), directing them to file a reply. On October 15, 2018, the NCLAT had stayed all proceedings against IL&FS and other group companies till further orders. PTI

Banks for govt. transactions to remain open on March 31

All public sector banks and some private sector banks undertaking government transactions (Agency Banks) will remain open to the public on March 31, which is a Sunday. "The Government of India has made a request to keep all branches of the banks dealing with government receipts and payments open for transactions on March 31, 2024, so as to account for all the Government transactions relating to receipts and payments in the FY 2023-24 itself," the RBI said in a circular.

'Consumption unequal, not as weak'

HSBC Global Research says public investments still below pre-COVID levels as PSUs pull back outlays, premature to say India at cusp of a new private investment cycle as outlays mainly in real estate; consumption led by wealthy households

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India's investment upturn is being led by private real estate outlays rather than public capex, while consumption growth, which has been weak, may be revised upwards in the forthcoming official GDP numbers, HSBC's research unit noted in a report on Wednesday, questioning the "dominant narrative" about the economy's growth drivers.

While conceding that consumption growth is not equitable, with "top-of-the-pyramid" household spends rising faster than for those at the bottom of the pyramid, HSBC Global Research's chief economist for India and Indonesia Pranjul Bhandari, asserted there were several reasons to believe consumption growth was not as slow as the national income estimates suggested.

Inequitable consumption

Top-of-the-pyramid household spending is rising faster than for those at the bottom of the pyramid: HSBC Global Research

- Consumer goods imports, personal services, non-housing personal loans rising quickly, says HSBC's Bhandari
- Narrative on investment-led growth does not pass 'smell test'
- Higher consumption needs to kick in to spur confidence for private sector to invest: Bhandari

"Consumer goods imports, personal services, and non-housing personal loans have been rising quickly. We believe the private consumption data will be revised up in subsequent GDP revisions," she wrote. However, even consumer staples were weak and a broad revival in private investments remained elusive, the lender's research arm indicated.

Stressing that the narrative of robust GDP being driven by public investment and early signs that private sector was opting to invest rather than consume, did not pass 'the smell test', Ms. Bhandari said higher consumption needed to kick in to spur confidence to invest. "In French revolution parlance, is it true that the Indian economy is eating cake while not being able to afford bread," she asked.

Despite the government ramping up capex, public sector firms were cutting back investments, leaving overall public investment ratio below pre-pandemic levels, Ms. Bhandari said. "Instead, it is private investment that has risen, led by 'dwellings and structures'. This chimes well with the rise in house sales and housing loan growth."

'Economic activity sped to a 9-month high in February'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India's economic activity likely quickened to a nine-month high in February, despite rural demand remaining weak and unemployment rising, thanks to a sharp expansion in exports, imports as well as corporate bond issuances, as per a CareEdge Ratings barometer of activity.

The CareEdge Economic Meter, a composite index covering 18 high-frequency economic indicators to track the state of the economy, suggested a 10.3% year-on-year uptick in activity levels.

Fourteen of the tracked indicators witnessed annual growth, including credit growth, which hit a three-month high of 20.5% in February, power consumption (up 8.4%), and passenger vehicles and two-three wheeler sales, which rose 10.9% and 34.5%, respectively.

However, momentum in the services sector slipped in February, while fuel consumption growth slowed to 5.7%, from 8.3% in January.

'Tractor sales contract'

"Tractor sales, a proxy for rural demand, remained in contraction for the third consecutive month, dropping 25.7% in February," the rating firm said in a research note.

The unemployment rate was also a concern, as it rose to 8% last month from 6.8% in January. "Although the unemployment rate eased in urban areas, it increased in rural areas," CareEdge observed.

BPCL, BP said to ink 4-month U.S. oil deal

Reuters
NEW DELHI/SINGAPORE

Bharat Petroleum Corp. has signed a deal with BP to buy 1 million barrels per month of U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for four months, trade sources said.

BPCL would start taking delivery of the oil from June, they said.

BPCL often buys U.S. oil for its three refineries, which have a combined capacity to process 7,06,000 bpd of crude.

WTI will meet BPCL's low-sulphur crude requirement, one of the sources said, adding the economics and quality of the U.S. crude is better than oil from West Africa and the Mediterranean.

BPCL is expected to process more crude in the fiscal year starting in April compared with the current year, when it had shut its 1,56,000 bpd Bina refinery for a month for maintenance. It had also shut units at its Mumbai refinery.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	WEDNESDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	72,102	0.12
US Dollar	83.19	-0.19
Gold	66,320	0.10
Brent oil	85.98	-1.66

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter	3051.45	-1.25
Adani Ports	1245.40	4.20
Apollo Hosp	6174.05	60.85
Asian Paints	2824.90	9.80
Axis Bank	1034.75	-16.05
Bajaj Auto	8635.60	-4.60
Bajaj Finserv	1584.70	3.20
Bajaj Finance	6649.50	53.25
Bharti Airtel	1231.80	3.45
BPCL	566.65	8.95
Britannia Ind	4802.90	-14.05
Cipla	1417.40	-18.30
Coal India	419.50	0.45
Divis Lab	3428.30	-18.85
Dr Reddys Lab	6103.30	-31.60
Eicher Motors	3873.60	156.75
Grasim Ind	2167.50	-6.30
HCL Tech	1587.10	-12.05
HDFC Bank	1431.05	-18.30
HDFC Life	626.40	-6.10
Hero MotoCorp	4510.45	-31.30
Hindalco	527.85	-5.80
Hind Unilever	2241.95	-25.00
ICICI Bank	1084.50	0.55
IndusInd Bank	1441.55	7.45
Infosys	1554.95	-6.50
ITC	415.70	6.15
JSW Steel	794.65	-6.40
Kotak Bank	1765.40	15.75
L&T	3509.70	8.00
LTIMindtree Ltd.	5101.05	-4.65
M&M	1844.40	0.50
Maruti Suzuki	11941.15	344.10
NestleIndia	2550.25	54.20
NTPC	313.65	0.20
ONGC	263.85	4.60
PowerGrid Corp	264.65	5.65
Reliance Ind	2887.50	37.00
SBI Life	1458.40	-2.95
State Bank	736.25	12.45
Sun Pharma	1549.35	0.90
TataConsumerProduct	1124.05	-22.20
Tata Motors	940.45	-17.30
Tata Steel	145.65	-3.10
TCS	3970.90	-6.40
Tech Mahindra	1264.30	12.05
Titan	3590.50	7.10
UltraTech Cement	9484.55	31.30
UPL	455.45	-5.60
Wipro	493.50	-1.35

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on March 20

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	82.96	83.28
Euro	89.94	90.29
British Pound	105.33	105.74
Japanese Yen (100)	54.68	54.89
Chinese Yuan	11.52	11.57
Swiss Franc	93.04	93.41
Singapore Dollar	61.70	61.94
Canadian Dollar	61.02	61.26
Malaysian Ringitt	17.50	17.58
Australian Dollar	54.04	54.26

Source:Indian Bank

'Only 7% of colleges attain 100% campus placement'

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

Only 7% of Indian colleges achieve full campus placement, as the top challenges for a significant percentage of recruiters are skill gap and the inability to discover the right talent, according to a report.

According to the annual Unstop Talent Report 2024, as many as 91% of students believe their college curricula offer an adequate level of preparedness for a job.

However, 66% of recruiters and 42% of university partners feel the skill gap and lack of preparation, respectively, are major challenges in campus recruitment.

Indian investors led by JSW pick up 51% stake in MG Motor India

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Chinese auto major SAIC Motor has divested a 51% stake in its subsidiary MG Motor India to Indian investors led by the steel-to-paints conglomerate JSW Group.

JSW Group Chairman Sajjan Jindal on Wednesday announced a joint venture with SAIC, marking the group's entry into the automobile space.

The joint venture company is known as JSW MG Motor India Private Ltd., and JSW Group has picked up a 35% stake. Other investors include Indian financial institutions with an 8% stake, the employees of MG India with 5% and MG India's dealers with 3%.

Rajeev Chaba, CEO Emeritus, MG Motor India said that the investors would put in more than ₹5,000 crore into the company and the capital would be deployed for capacity expansion – from 1 lakh units per annum to 3 lakh units, among others.

Mr. Jindal said since the company wanted to make New Energy Vehicles (NEVs) it decided to partner with SAIC, which has the NEV technology, and MG, which is a 100-year-old British brand.

Stating that JSW would disrupt the Indian automotive sector, Mr. Jindal said the JSW MG joint venture would aim to introduce a new car every 3-6 months.

Plug-in hybrids

While the focus would be on NEVs, the entity would continue to produce ICE vehicles. To begin with emphasis would be on plug-in hybrid vehicles, he said, adding the company would also have premium vehicles in its portfolio.

"We believe in scale and we will disrupt the market. We will do deep localisation and we want to create a Maruti moment in the NEV segment," he said referring to the automobile revolution ushered in by Maruti Udyog in the 1980s.

Snapchat sharpens focus on India Gen Z

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Firm has 200 million users in India; 85% users in Bengaluru use the app daily, Snap said

Snap Inc., the owner of messaging app Snapchat, aims to grow its engagement with the burgeoning opportunity offered by India's tech-savvy Gen Z, said its India MD Pulkit Trivedi.

The company's image messaging mobile app Snapchat offers a unique platform for engaging these young audiences in creative ways, standing out as a vibrant hub for users who were not readily accessible on other platforms, Mr. Trivedi said, adding that India was home to a fifth of the world's Gen Z population.

"Our commitment is to deepen our connection with young India; make Snapchat their go-to platform for authentic self-expression, real connections," he added.

Snapchat has 200 million users in India and 85% of those in Bengaluru, use the app daily, said Mr. Trivedi citing a recent YouGov survey, revealing 78% of Bengaluru users appreciated Snapchat's ability to facilitate fun connections with friends and family.

'Blue Star mulls new deep-freezer plant'

N. Anand
CHENNAI

B. Thiagarajan

Air-conditioning major Blue Star Ltd. is planning to set up a new plant for making deep freezers by FY27 as the present facilities in Wada and Ahmedabad are fast approaching the optimum level, a top official said.

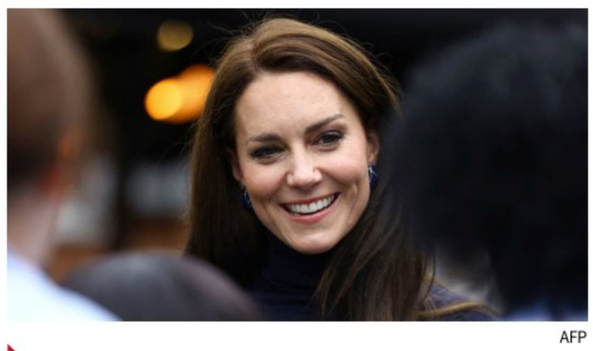
"We can produce three lakh deep freezers in Wada and one lakh units in Ahmedabad," MD B. Thiagarajan told *The Hindu*. "We will touch three lakh in FY24 and 3.5 lakh in FY25,"

"After that, it will be a close call. By FY27, we have to decide about a new plant. It can come up in the North with a capacity to make five lakh deep freezers. Like the Sricity model, we will raise the production capacity in modules of 1.5 lakh units a year."

Stating the current demand for deep freezers from modern retail stores was 'small' at this juncture, he said in the next two-three years, the demand will start increasing.

LONDON

U.K. police to probe attempted breach of Kate's medical notes

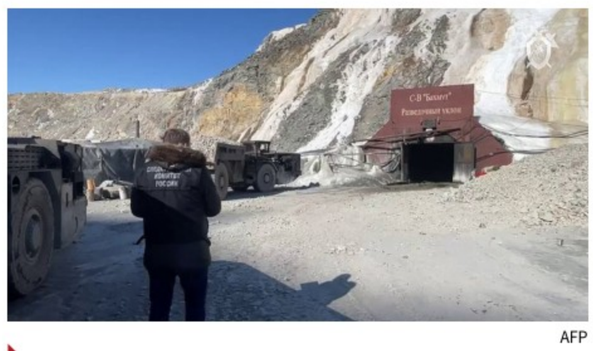


AFP

U.K. police have been asked to look at claims that at least one worker attempted to access the confidential medical records of Catherine, Princess of Wales during her hospitalisation for abdominal surgery, a minister said on Wednesday. The request follows a report in the *Daily Mirror* newspaper. AFP

MOSCOW

Russian rescuers scramble to save 13 trapped under giant gold mine



AFP

Russian rescuers were scrambling to save 13 workers trapped inside a giant gold mine near the Chinese border for a second day on Wednesday, as officials warned of a "difficult situation". Russia has said the miners have been stuck after a rockslide covered them in rubble at the Pioneer mine in the Far Eastern Amur region. AFP

MONTREAL

Canada halting arms shipments to Israel; Tel Aviv criticises the move

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Canada will halt all arms shipments to Israel, a government official said on Tuesday, a decision that has drawn the ire of Israel as it faces growing international scrutiny over its war in the Gaza Strip. Israel has been a top receiver of Canadian arms exports, with C$21 million worth of military materiel exported to Israel in 2022. AFP

BANDA ACEH

Boat carrying dozens of Rohingya Muslims capsizes off Indonesia

AP

A wooden boat carrying dozens of Rohingya Muslims capsized off Indonesia's northernmost coast on Wednesday. Local fishermen rescued six refugees who said more people were still on the boat. There were no immediate reports of casualties. The survivors were moved to a temporary shelter in the Samatiga sub-district. AP

IMF to release $1.1 bn from bailout fund to Pakistan

An IMF statement says it 'reached a staff-level agreement with the Pakistani authorities' to release the final tranche of the $3 bn fund; Islamabad's economic position has improved, says the lender

Associated Press
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reached a preliminary agreement for the release of $1.1 billion from a $3 billion bailout following days-long talks in Islamabad, the IMF said on Wednesday.

Under the deal, Pakistan will receive the final tranche from the bailout that was approved by the IMF in July to save the nation from defaulting on its debt repayments.

An IMF statement said it "has reached a staff-level agreement with the Pakistani authorities" and noted that approval by the IMF's executive board "is considered a formality".

The announcement came after talks between the IMF and the new government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif concluded in Islamabad. Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and the IMF's mission chief to Pakistan, Nathan Porter, led their teams during the talks, which began on Thursday last week.

Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb speaks with IMF's Nathan Porter during a meeting in Islamabad on March 14. AFP

Pakistan signed the latest short-term agreement last year to overcome one of the worst economic crises in its history that had raised fears the South Asian Islamic nation could default on the payment of foreign debts. The $3 billion bailout was signed by Mr. Sharif, who replaced former Premier Imran Khan after a no-confidence vote in Parliament.

Mr. Sharif was again elected the country's premier this month following February 8 parliamentary elections.

The latest development came weeks after Mr. Khan wrote a letter to the IMF urging it to link any talks with Islamabad to an audit of the recent elections, which his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party says were rigged. Authorities have dismissed the charge as baseless.

Pakistani authorities have criticised Mr. Khan for writing the letter, saying it was a bid to harm the country's already ailing economy.

In its statement on Wednesday, the IMF said "Pakistan's economic and financial position has improved" in recent months. However, it noted the "growth is expected to be modest this year and inflation remains well above target, and ongoing policy and reform efforts are required to address Pakistan's deep-seated economic vulnerabilities amidst the ongoing challenges posed by elevated external and domestic financing needs and an unsettled external environment".

The IMF also said Pakistan has also expressed interest in receiving a new bailout of up to $8 billion when the current one expires this month.

China blasts criticism of Hong Kong security law

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

China blasted critics of Hong Kong's new national security law on Wednesday, after Western powers and the United Nations said it would further curtail freedoms in the finance hub. The city's legislature passed the law unanimously on Tuesday, introducing tough new penalties for five categories of crimes including treason and theft of state secrets.

Commonly referred to as Article 23, the homegrown security law will work in tandem with a 2020 Beijing-imposed version that has silenced nearly all dissent in Hong Kong and seen nearly 300 people arrested since its enactment.

Irish PM Leo Varadkar announces resignation

Agence France-Presse
DUBLIN

Leo Varadkar on Wednesday announced that he was stepping down as Ireland's Prime Minister and leader of the Fine Gael party in the governing coalition, citing "personal and political" reasons. Pundits called the move, just 10 weeks before Ireland holds European Parliament and local elections, a "political earthquake". The country must also hold a general election within a year.

Deputy Prime Minister Micheal Martin, leader of the Fianna Fail coalition partner, said the announcement was "unexpected" but added that he expects the government to run its full term.

An emotional Varadkar, 45, said he felt he was no longer the "best person" to lead the country.

Leo Varadkar

"I believe this government can be re-elected," Mr. Varadkar said in a statement read on the steps of Government Buildings in the Irish capital, surrounded by his Fine Gael Cabinet colleagues.

"I believe a new Taoiseach (Prime Minister) will be better-placed than me to achieve that – to renew and strengthen the top team, to refocus our message and policies, and to drive implementation," he added.

"I am resigning the presidency and leadership of Fine Gael and will resign as Taoiseach as soon as my successor is able to take up that office," Mr. Varadkar told reporters.

Earlier this month, Mr. Varadkar was widely blamed for a twin defeat, including the biggest ever referendum loss by a government, on proposals to reform references to women, the family and care in the Irish Constitution.

Mr. Varadkar said his centre-right Fine Gael party will have a leadership contest, and that he will remain as premier until the new leader is elected, after Parliament returns from recess next month.

Mustafa Suleyman is AI chief of Microsoft

Associated Press
LONDON

Microsoft has hired Mustafa Suleyman to head up its consumer artificial intelligence business, adding to its ranks an influential figure in the artificial intelligence world to cement its position at the forefront of the booming AI industry.

Mr. Suleyman said in a post on LinkedIn on Monday that he'll become CEO of Microsoft AI, leading all of the company's consumer AI products and research, including its generative AI service Copilot as well as its Bing search engine and Edge browser.

The hiring is likely to bolster Microsoft's lead position in the booming AI industry, as big tech companies battle for position to capitalise on demand for AI services. Microsoft has teamed up with ChatGPT maker OpenAI, investing billions of dollars into the San Francisco company, and recently partnered with France's Mistral.

Mustafa Suleyman

Pope repeats call for talks in Ukraine

Agence France-Presse
VATICAN CITY

Kyiv reacted with outrage, recalling the Vatican's envoy and saying it would 'never' surrender

Pope Francis on Wednesday repeated his call for negotiations to end wars in Ukraine and Gaza, after remarks about "raising the white flag" sparked outrage in Kyiv.

At his weekly audience at the Vatican, the 87-year-old turned his thoughts to the populations of "the martyred Ukraine and of the Holy Land, Palestine, Israel, who suffer so much from the horror of war".

Sparking outrage

"Let us never forget, war is always a defeat. We cannot go forward during a war. We must make every effort to talk, to negotiate."

Pope Francis sparked outrage with an interview broadcast earlier this month where, talking about Ukraine, he praised those who "have the courage to raise the white flag and negotiate".

Kyiv – which has been fighting a Russian invasion for two years – reacted with outrage, recalling the Vatican's envoy and saying it would "never" surrender.

Australia hosts China FM, sees 'stability' in relations despite evident tensions

Agence France-Presse
CANBERRA

China and Australia claimed to have stabilised long-strained relations after talks in Canberra on Wednesday, despite evident tensions over a high-profile prisoner, trade and a new crackdown in Hong Kong.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Australia for the first time since 2017, a trip designed to draw a line under disputes related to everything from the origins of COVID-19 to military deployments.

The meeting was framed by warm words, with Mr. Wang saying the two sides had "broken the ice", and that "mutual trust" and "good momentum" were slowly building.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong praised renewed "stability" in relations and said it was crucial to recognise "how much progress we have made in a short period of time".

Wang Yi

Australia's relationship with China began unravelling in 2018, when Canberra excluded telecommunications giant Huawei from its 5G network on security grounds and later passed laws on foreign interference.

Then in 2020, Australia called for an international investigation into the origins of COVID-19 – an action China saw as politically motivated.

Mr. Wang later told an Australia-China business council that common interests between the two countries far outweigh their differences.

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PERSONAL
CHANGE OF NAME

I, DAVAN Raju Harishkumar S/o Harishkumar.S, #813, GF, 3rd Crs, 11th Blk, 2nd Stage, Nagarabhavi, Bluru-72 have changed my name to Davan Harish Raju vide affidavit dt 20.03.24 before Notary S.Vijayakumar, Bluru

I, Nirmala Prahlad Bhat D/O Prahlad Bhat R/o #161 Akshay 2nd Main 5th Cross Teachers Colony Nagarbhavi Bangalore 560072 have changed my name to Archana Atul Alekar.

I, Ghantasala V L P S S Sarvani W/O, Kuppa Rajasekhar R/o S006, Jamadagni Sankalp, 6th Main Navodaya Nagar, Jp Nagar 7th Phase, Bengaluru Karnataka 560078 have changed my name to Kuppa V L P S S Sarvani.

I, GEETHA Kumbaiah, R/at No.9/51, Vokaligara Street, Near Devarajappa Building, Yelahanka, Bangalore-560064, have changed my name from Geetha Kumbaiah to Geetha vide affidavit dated 16-03-2024 before Notary Sivakumara.M.N, Bengaluru.

I, SIDDIQUE Khan, have changed my name from Siddique Khan to Siddiq Khan vide affidavit dated 28-03-2024 before Notary Sivakumara.M. N, B'luru

I, KHALANDER Khan, have changed my name from Khalander Khan to Khalandar Khan vide affidavit dated 18-03-2024 before Notary Sivakumara.M.N, Bengaluru.

I, SHAH Abulkalam Ahteshamuddin, R/at No.121, 21st Cross, 16th Main, Near MICO Police Station, BTM 2nd Stage, Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore -560076, have changed my name from Shah Abulkalam Ahteshamuddin to Shah Abulkalam Ahteshamuddin Kunjenashin vide affidavit dated 19/03/2024 before Notary Sivakumara.M.N, Bengaluru.

I, K.RAMAKKA, M/o Service No.6486992F, Rank : Ex-HAV/ASH, Name : Koravara Venkatesh, R/a No.3/7, Ramaiah street, Vannarpet, Viveknagar, Bangalore-560047. I have changed my name from Ramakka to K.Ramakka and my correct DOB 01.01.1958. Vide affidavit date : 11.03.2024. Sworn before notary : A.R. Muneer Ahmed

I, K.HOLEYAPPA, F/o Service No.6486992-F, Rank : Ex-HAV/ASH, Name : Koravara Venkatesh, R/a No.3/7, Ramaiah street, Vannarpet, Viveknagar, Bangalore-560047. I have changed my name from Holiyappa.K to K.Holeyappa & my Correct DOB : 01.01.1945. Vide affidavit date : 11.03.2024. Sworn before notary : A.R. Muneer Ahmed

PERSONAL
CHANGE OF NAME

I, KAMANA Kalro, R/at No.132, A2, Jyothi Nivas, Shopping Street, K P West, Subbaiah Layout, Bangalore-560020, have changed my name from Kamana Kalro to Kamana Bhandari vide affidavit dated 19/03/2024 before Notary Sivakumara.M.N, B'luru.

PUBLIC NOTICE

In the Court of XVII Civil Judge Class-II
District Court, Bhopal
Presiding Officer : Ms. Richa Bhatt
Publication under Order 05 Rule 20 Civil Procedure Code, 1908
(RCS B/0000189/2021)
Vali Baba (V.B) Technologies Through Director Shri Nikhil Ghorpade
Versus
Shanmugha Murthy
Process ID - /2024
Hearing Date : 07/05/2024

To
Shanmugha Murthy
Bangaluru (Karnataka)
That the Applicant Vali Baba (V.B) Technologies, Director Shri Nikhil Ghorpade has filed a suit against recovery for damages against you, you are summoned to appear before this Court to answer the Suit within 30 days of the publication of the Notice. You may appear in Court in person or by a pleader (Advocate) who has been duly instructed & who can answer all material statements in the case. You are also directed to submit a Written Statement of your defence on that day & to produce on that day all documents in your possession or power on which your defence or set-off claim or Counter claim is based, and if you submit any documents whether in your possession or in your power as evidence in support of your defence or set-off claim or Counter Claim, then enter the same in the list provided along with the Written Statements.
You are informed that if you do not appear in this Court within the period mentioned above, the case will be heard Ex-Parte & will be settled in your absence. It is also informed that if you are willing to settle the matter through mediator then please inform the Presiding Officer.
This is given under my hand & seal of the Court on 14th March 2024.
JUDGE

PERSONAL
THANKSGIVING

Gratitude to Lord
- M.Sainath and Family

LEGAL NOTICE

In the Court of the Commissioner of Employee's Compensation, Salem
W.C. No. 156/2023
1. Murugesan,
S/o Periyasamy,
364 Bidrahalli Hobli, Yarappanhalli Bande, Doddagubbi Post, Dr. Sivarama Kanath Nagar, Bangalore North, Karnataka state. Now Residing AT Kauthukkarankottai village, Salamarathupatti post, Uthangarai Taluk, Krishnagiri Dt.
2. Mathammal, W/o Murugesh Kauthukkarankottai villlage, Salamarathupatti post, Uthangarai Taluk, Krishnagiri Dt.
...Petitioners.
-VS-
Sandiya, W/o Late Durairaj. 364 Bidrahalli Hobli, Yarappanhalli Bande, Doddagubbi Post, Dr. Sivarama Kanath Nagar, Bangalore North Karnataka state - 560 077.
...3rd Respondent
COURT NOTICE
The Petitioners had filed petition under Compensation Act Before this Hono'ble Court WC No.156/2023 If you have any objection you may appear before this Hon'ble Court on 03-04-2024 at 10.Am either in person or through an advocate and file your objection if to do so the matter will be decided set Exparte.
/By Court Order/
S.K.VIJAYAKUMAR, B.Sc., B.L.,
Advocate, Enroll No. 1519/2003
Sendamangalam,
Namakkal, TamilNadu
Cell No. 9994049597

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE XXVI ADDL. CITY CIVIL & SESSIONS JUDGE, MAYO HALL AT BENGALURU (CCH-20)
ORIGINAL SUIT NO. 25383 OF 2022
BETWEEN :
ICICI Bank Ltd,
A body corporate incorporated and registered under the Indian Companies Act, 1956 and licensed as a Bank under the Banking Regulation Act 1949 having Registered Office at: "Landmark", Race Course Circle, Vadodara - 390 007 And having its Regional office at ICICI Bank Ltd., 11th Floor, C-Wing, Mittal Tower, M.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560 001. And represented by its POA Holder Mr. Pramodh G, S/o Gurumalappa. Age: 46 years.
...PLAINTIFF
AND:
Mr. Nagarajuna Rajulapati
...DEFENDANT
Summons/Notice through Paper Publication
Defendant
Mr. NAGARJUNA RAJULAPATI
Aged about 31 years,
S/o Satyanarayana Rajulapati
R/at, No. 48, 4th Cross, Near Sai Baba Temple, Akash Nagar, A Narayanapura, Dooravaninagara,
Bengaluru- 560 086.
...DEFENDANT
WHEREAS the above named Plaintiff has instituted case against you for recovery loan amount Rs.8,83,655/- together with interest at the rate 24% p.a. from date of due to till the date of realization.
You are hereby summoned to appear before this Hon'ble XXVI Addl. City Civil & Session Judge Mayohall, (CCH-20), Mayohall at Bengaluru, Court in person or by a advocate/ pleader or 02/04/2024 at 11:00 AM to answer the questions of the same. Failing which the matter will be heard and determined as "EX-PARTE".
Given under my hand and seal of the Court on this 13th day of March,2024.
By order of the Court,
Deputy Registrar,
City Civil Court,
Mayo Hall Unit
Bengaluru
Advocate for Plaintiff
Mr. K.N. Arvinda Navada
Advocate
No. 177/1, (88), 1st Floor,
Besides 12th Cross,
Cubbonpet Main Road,
Bengaluru- 560 002

GETTING IN

Warrier included in place of the injured Shami in Titans' squad

M. PERIASAMY

Gujarat Titans has announced Sandeep Warrier as replacement for the injured Mohammed Shami for the IPL at his base price of ₹50 lakh. The 32-year-old Tamil Nadu pacer has played five IPL matches for Kolkata Knight Riders and Mumbai Indians. Shami, who recently underwent an ankle surgery, is currently in recovery.

YOUNG TEARAWAY

Teenaged South African pacer Maphaka to replace Madhushanka

GETTY IMAGES

Mumbai Indians announced that South African left-arm pacer Kwena Maphaka will replace injured Dilshan Madushanka. The 17-year-old, named player-of-the-tournament at the ICC U-19 men's Cricket World Cup with 21 wickets, will join the five-time champion for his base price of ₹50 lakh.

PENALISED

Hasaranga suspended by ICC for Bangladesh Tests, could play IPL

AFP

Wanindu Hasaranga could be available for the initial few games for Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL after he was suspended from the two-Test series against Bangladesh by the ICC. The ICC informed that Hasaranga has breached the threshold of eight demerit points, which have been converted into four suspension points.

PRIORITIES

LSG's Willey to miss the start of IPL due to personal reasons

RITU RAJ KONWAR

England bowler David Willey is set to miss the start of the upcoming Indian Premier League 2024 due to personal reasons, according to *ESPNcricinfo*. The English left-arm seamer was signed by Lucknow Super Giants at his base price of ₹ 2 crore in the auction. Earlier, Mark Wood was pulled out by the ECB to control his workload.

Chennai Super Kings will rely on inspirational leadership and consistency to continue reign

For the injured Conway, the side has a like-for-like replacement in Ravindra or the option of drafting in big-hitter Mitchell; left-arm pacer Mustafizur has the variations to deliver at the back-end; spinners could hold sway at Chepauk again

IPL-17 COUNTDOWN

S. Dipak Ragav

When Ravindra Jadeja hit the winning runs off the last ball of the final to help Chennai Super Kings (CSK) beat Gujarat Titans (GT) and clinch its fifth title in Ahmedabad last year, there were wild celebrations but also a bit of trepidation. There was a feeling that CSK's talismanic captain, M.S. Dhoni, could well bid adieu to the game in style.

However, the 42-year-old made thousands of fans happy when he said that though it would have been easier to walk away on a high, he wanted to work hard and return for one more year.

Dhoni, who played with a knee injury in 2023, underwent surgery immediately after the IPL to prepare for this year.

Ahead of its title defence campaign, Super Kings bolstered their strong lineup with some top picks like Daryl Mitchell, Rachin Ravindra, Mustafizur Rahman, and Shardul Thakur at the auction.

A few new recruits have already become vital following injuries to opener Devon Conway and death-over specialist Matheesha Pathirana.

Without Pathirana, who will miss the initial set of matches, CSK lacks a tearaway fast bowler who can nail the toe-crushing yorkers and it may rely on Mustafizur's variations at the back-end of the innings.

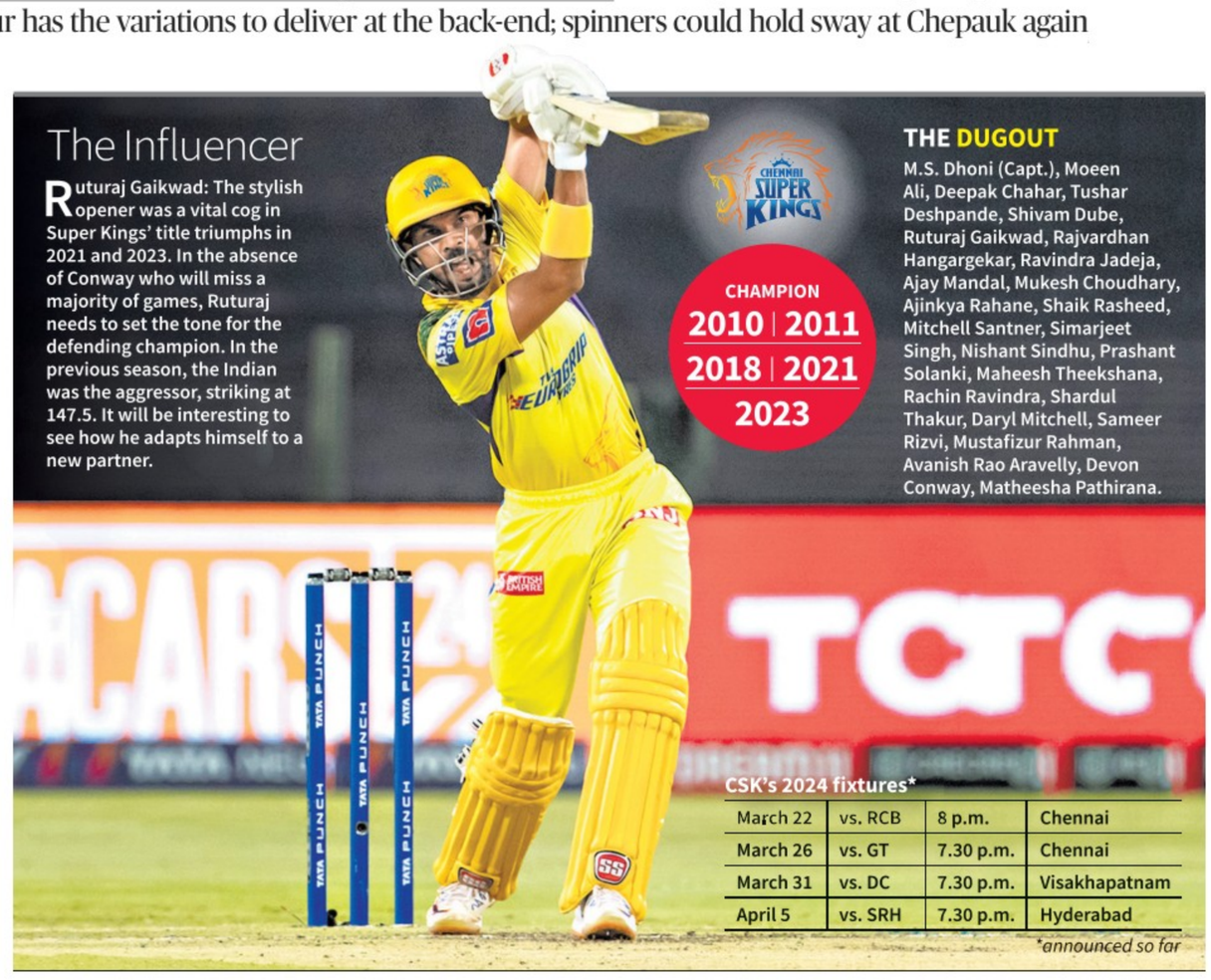
For Conway, the outfit has a like-for-like replacement in Ravindra or the option to draft in the big-hitting Mitchell. It will be interesting to see whether the uncapped batter Sameer Rizvi, bought for ₹8.4 crore, can fill Ambati Rayudu's shoes in the middle-order.

A key ingredient behind the team's consistency is that the squad is built to maximise its home advantage at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium, where the spinners dominate.

The franchise has perfected a method for racking up wins at its den and consistently reaching the playoffs, which is always the primary target.

But beyond all this, what makes CSK tick is how the management backs the players to the hilt to get the maximum out of them.

Come Friday, Dhoni will again take up the baton to try and conduct another stirring symphony in front of adoring fans, who will savour every moment of his presence on the field, regardless of whether it is his final bow or not.



Maestro: If Dhoni can conjure up another triumph, it will be sweet music for the fans in yellow. FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU

Can new skipper Hardik be the game-changer for MI?

Amol Karhadkar

Hardik Pandya is back. So is Jasprit Bumrah. But more than discussing Mumbai Indians empty cabinet in the Indian Premier League for three years, the franchise has been in the news for all the wrong reasons.

Hardik's return to MI - perhaps the most significant off-season trade in the history of the league so far - has caused a stir among the loyal fans that refuses to die even as IPL 17 is hours away from getting started. Captain Hardik seems to have turned the loyal fans away, who still remain in awe of Rohit Sharma as the captain.

Besides reducing the fan-base, Hardik's return, especially as captain, - at the cost of Cameron Green's trade-out - may have possibly created ego issues among the senior pros. Not just Rohit, but the likes of Suryakumar Yadav and Bumrah who had been waiting in the wings to take over the mantle if required will have every reason to feel gutted.

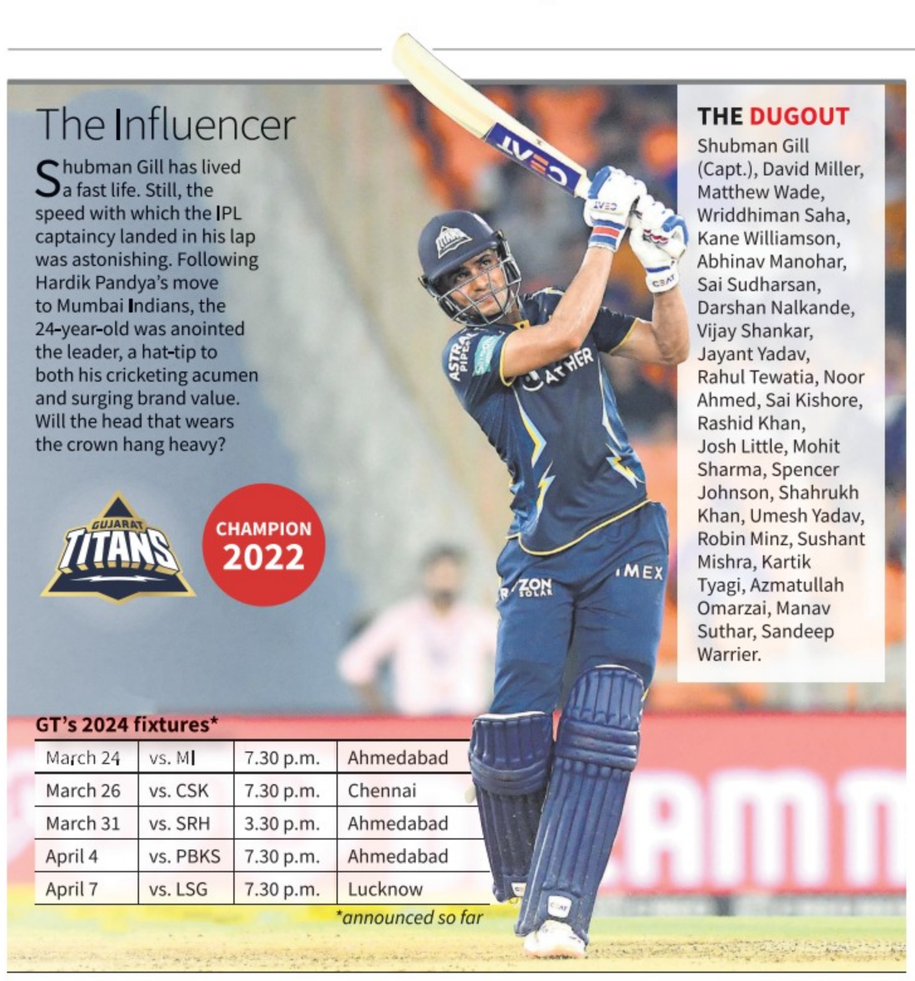
If Hardik, the all-rounder, ensures that the flock is united on and off the field, only then will his on-field performance count at the end of the season. Ishan Kishan will also be under scanner, making a return to big-stage ticket after being excluded from the BCCI central contracts list.

Despite Bumrah's fitness, Mumbai Indians has plenty to ponder over the combination early on. Suryakumar has been sidelined for the first week while Gerald Coetzee remains a doubtful starter for the first few games.

It leaves Akash Madhwal - the find of 2023 - to pair with Bumrah and share the pace-bowling workload, at least in the initial phase of the tournament. Besides, it's high time Tim David starts repaying the faith in him as Kieron Pollard's successor as the finisher.

MI will also be hoping for Tilak Varma to rise to the occasion and stake a claim for India's T20 World Cup campaign with a strong outing up front, especially in Suryakumar's absence.

Despite the positives, with so many factors going against the squad, it will need a miracle - or an individual spark of brilliance - to get MI's campaign going. Can captain Hardik be the game-changer?



Focus on first-time captain Gill as the Titans hit reset button for upcoming campaign

N. Sudarshan

When Gujarat Titans came into being in 2022, not many expected the side to find instant success. The competition in IPL was brutal, for in the 14 seasons until then, 11 had been won by just three teams. There were three others who had not touched any silverware in more than a decade's existence.

Not only did GT win the title in its debut year, but the outfit nearly defended the crown in 2023, thwarted only by a last-ball boundary by Ravindra Jadeja in the final. In under two years, the team appeared fully formed and exuded a dominating and commanding aura.

When it kick-starts this season's campaign, however, GT will be a tad diminished.

Hardik Pandya, its inspirational skipper for two years, has moved to Mumbai Indians, while Mohammed Shami, Purple Cap winner with 28 wickets in IPL 16, is out after undergoing an ankle surgery.

Much will depend on how star India cricketer Shubman Gill handles the twin responsibilities of captaincy and that of the premier batter.

The 24-year-old has never led in the IPL but his recent form against England in Tests (452 runs), and his IPL performance from 2023 (a tournament-high 890 runs at a strike-rate of 157.80), should give him confidence.

Wonder what's in store: Rashid will look to deliver for Titans. FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

GT picked up Afghanistan all-rounder Azmatullah Omarzai at the auction last December, perhaps as a replacement for Hardik. While the 23-year-old has proved a capable medium-pacer, he is yet to develop into a fearsome batter like Hardik. The batting will thus revolve around Gill, to be assisted by the fast-rising B. Sai Sudharsan, fellow Tamil Nadu player Vijay Shankar, South Africa's David Miller among others.

There is an abundance of lower middle-order firepower with the likes of Rahul Tewatia, Abhinav Manohar and Shahrukh Khan capable finishers. There are also the wise old heads in Wriddhiman Saha and Kane Williamson.

The sensational Rashid Khan (27 wickets in 2023) will lead the bowling. Pacer Mohit Sharma came out of IPL wilderness to finish with 27 scalps last year, and in the absence of Shami, Mohit and Umesh Yadav need to come good. Aussie left-armer Spencer Johnson was acquired at a princely sum of ₹10 crore. Can he replicate his 2023-24 Big Bash League performance (19 wickets) in the sub-continental shores?

INBRIEF

Moment of my life: Shreyanka describes meeting Kohli

She was the cynosure of all eyes on Sunday having played a massive role in RCB's WPL triumph but Tuesday night gave 'Purple Cap' winner Shreyanka Patil a chance to enjoy a rare 'Fan Girl' moment with none other than Virat Kohli. "Started watching cricket cos of him. Grew up dreaming to be like him. And last night, had the moment of my life," she wrote on 'X', posting her picture alongside Kohli from the RCB 'Unbox' event. "Virat said, 'Hi Shreyanka, well bowled.' He actually knows my name!"

No Russian, Belarusian athletes in Olympics OC: IOC

Russians and Belarusians will not take part in the parade of athletes at the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympics in July, the International Olympic Committee said on Tuesday. The athletes from these countries who qualify for the Games will be competing as independent athletes without their flags and anthems following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Balaji-Begemann pair enters quarterfinals

Sriram Balaji and Andre Begemann beat Andre Goransson and Andrea Pelligrino 6-3, 6-2 in the doubles pre-quarterfinals of the €74,825 Challenger tennis in Murcia, Spain, on Wednesday. The all-India pairs of Anirudh Chandrasekar and Vijay Sundar Prashanth, Arjun Kadhe and Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan also made the doubles quarterfinals.

The results: €74,825 Challenger, Murcia: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Anirudh Chandrasekar & Vijay Sundar Prashanth bt Rithvik Bollipalli & Niki Poonacha 6-3, 6-3; Sriram Balaji & Andre Begemann (Ger) bt Andre Goransson (Swe) & Andrea Pellegrino (Ita) 6-3, 6-2; Arjun Kadhe & Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan bt Ivan Liutarevich & Vladyslav Manafov (Ukr) 6-4, 6-4.
$60,000 ITF women, Maribor, Slovenia: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Maia Lumsden (GBR) & Jessika Ponchet (Fra) bt Ali Collins (GBR) & Prarthana Thombare 7-6(0), 6-4.

World Boxing to seek IOC recognition for 2028 Games

World Boxing will seek recognition from Olympic organisers to replace the Russian-led International Boxing Association and keep the troubled sport on the programme for the 2028 Los Angeles Games, it said on Wednesday. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) stripped the IBA of recognition last June after saying it had failed to complete reforms on governance.

Afghanistan calls for 'politics-free cricket'

Afghanistan cricket bosses on Wednesday expressed disappointment that Australia had scrapped a men's T20 series because of deteriorating women's rights in the Taliban-ruled country and called for "politics-free cricket".

LIVE TELECAST

PVL: Final, Sony Sports Ten 1 (SD & HD) & LIV, 6.30 p.m.
FIFA World Cup Asian qualifier: India vs. Afghanistan, FanCode, 12.30 a.m. (Friday)

MCFC awarded 3-0 win after JFC's overseas player oversight

ISL

Sports Bureau

Mumbai City FC was awarded a 3-0 win against Jamshedpur FC in the Indian Super League after the latter was found to have violated the league's foreign players limit during a match between them on March 8.

MCFC had lodged a formal protest with the All India Football Federation, citing JFC's failure to field a minimum of seven domestic players on the pitch at all times during their match in Jamshedpur, which ended in a 1-1 draw.

The Islanders extend their lead at the top by two more points and now have 41 points from 19 matches. JFC dropped down to eighth with 20 points from 19 outings.

Heroes, Toofans to battle it out for ultimate glory

The former reaches the summit clash after two consecutive semifinal heartbreaks; the Delhi outfit has enjoyed a seven-match winning streak en route the final

PVL

Saikat Chakraborty
CHENNAI

Table topper Calicut Heroes will battle it out against newcomer Delhi Toofans in the summit clash of Prime Volleyball League season three at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium here on Thursday.

Heroes, led by the league's top attacker Jerome Vinith, reached the final after two consecutive semifinal heartbreaks. The 31-year-old expressed relief at reaching the summit clash without another nerve-wracking knockout encounter.

"It's been amazing this season. Reaching the final after two semifinal losses is a huge accomplishment. Topping the Super 5 was crucial after the initial phase." he said in a pre-match press conference on Wednesday.

Their journey has been fuelled by a strong team spirit and an array of powerful attackers like Chirag Yadav and Luiz Felipe Perotto.

The big moment: Come Thursday, Vinith or Tariq will have their hands on the coveted trophy. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

An experienced setter in Mohan Ukkrapandian and a reliable libero in Mukesh Kumar further bolster their chances.

On the other side of the net, Toofans have exceeded all expectations. Led by seasoned Indian international Saqlain Tariq, also making his PVL debut, the team has shaken up the established order since their arrival.

"Reaching the final is a significant achievement for us," Tariq said, summarising their exceptional debut season. "It will hold us in good stead for the future. We're extremely motivated to give our all in the final."

Powered by a potent blend of youth and experience, the Delhi-based team has enjoyed a seven-match winning streak en route the final. S. Santhosh, league's top scorer, has been instrumental in their success alongside overseas attacker Lazar Dodic and middle-blocker Daniel Aponza.

Direct qualification

The winner will also secure direct qualification for the prestigious Volleyball Club World Championship scheduled to take place in Chennai later this year.

Shot in the arm: India will be bolstered by the return of Jeakson Singh, jersey No. 14, after a long lay-off. FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

India eyes full points against a weakened Afghanistan

FIFA WC QUALIFIER

Press Trust of India
ABHA (SAUDI ARABIA)

Bolstered by the return of Jeakson Singh and Anwar Ali, the Indian football team will renew its quest for a maiden entry into the third round of FIFA World Cup Qualifiers when it faces a weakened Afghanistan here on Thursday.

With midfield general Jeakson and centre-back Anwar back in the line-up after long injury layoffs, because of which India suffered in recent past, the Blue Tigers will fancy their chances against the lower-ranked opponents in the second-round preliminary joint qualification match.

With three points and one win from two matches, India is currently third in Group A. Reigning Asian champion Qatar leads with six points from two wins, while Kuwait is second with one win. Having lost both its games so far, Afghanistan is last.

India's away win against Kuwait has put it in a strong position to progress further in the qualification cycle, something it has never done. Victories in its upcoming outings (away and home) against the 158-ranked Afghanistan will help India go to nine points and with Qatar expected to win its next two matches against Kuwait, the Blue Tigers have a real chance of jumping to second

Match timing:
12.30 a.m. (Friday).

Nayana bags long jump gold with personal best mark

Standout performers: On a day when no one threatened the Paris Games qualification mark, Kerala's Nayana James, TN's Pavithra Venkatesh and Abdulla Aboobacker of Kerala excelled. K. MURALI KUMAR

INDIAN OPEN JUMPS

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Kerala's Nayana James recorded a personal best mark, leaping 6.67m to secure the women's long jump gold at the 3rd Indian Open Jumps Competition held at the Anju Bobby George Foundation here on Wednesday.

On a day when no athlete threatened the 2024 Paris Olympics qualification mark, the 28-year-old's effort stood out, coming nearly seven years after her previous best of 6.55m.

Nayana's best jump came off her second attempt, leaving the fancied Shaili Singh with a mountain to climb. The 20-year-old struggled with her rhythm and could only manage 6.40m.

Nayana's distance was 16cms off Anju Bobby George's National record and 19cms behind the Paris mark. But National jumps coach Denis Kapustin, who had a trackside view to the proceedings, termed it the "best jumps result" in recent times.

Another athlete to reach a personal high was Tamil Nadu's 22-year-old Pavithra Venkatesh in women's pole vault as she scaled 4.15m. It was a sweet result for the 2023 Asian indoor silver medallist, who couldn't travel to Tehran last month for the 2024 edition as she couldn't carry her poles via cargo.

"I was happy to get my PB," Pavithra said. "I went for the National record (4.21m) but couldn't reach it. But overall I am happy, especially after what happened recently [Tehran fiasco]."

Statemate M. Gowtham scaled 5.10m in the men's competition – 30cm better than his hitherto best – to emerge first.

In men's triple jump, Commonwealth Games silver medallist Abdulla Aboobacker took gold (16.76m) ahead of CWG gold medallist Eldhose Paul (16.45) and Tamil Nadu's Selva Prabhu (16.32).

The results:

Men: High jump: 1. Jesse Sandesh (Kar) 2.20m, 2. Aadarsh Ram (TN) 2.10, 3. Swadhin Kumar Majhi (Odi) 2.10; **Long jump:** 1. Muhammed Anees Yahiya (Ker) 7.94m, 2. Aditya Kumar Singh (MP) 7.78, 3. Vishnu Siva Sankar (Del) 7.50.

Triple jump: 1. Abdulla Aboobacker (Ker) 16.76m, 2. Eldhose Paul (Ker) 16.45, 3. Selva Prabhu (TN) 16.32; **Pole vault:** 1. M. Gowtham (TN), 5.10m, 2. G. Reegan (TN) 5.00, 3. Shekhar Kumar Pandey (UP) 4.90.

Women: High jump: 1. Athira Somaraj (Ker) 1.76m, 2. Kevinaa Ashwine Annavi (TN) 1.74, 3. Khushi (Har) 1.68; **Long jump:** 1. Nayana James (Ker) 6.67m, 2. Shaili Singh (UP) 6.40, 3. Susmita (Raj) 6.28.

Triple jump: 1. Poorva Hitesh Sawant (Mah) 13.31m, 2. Sharvari Avinash Parule (Mah) 13.31, 3. N.V. Sheena (Ker) 13.18; **Pole vault:** 1. Pavithra Venkatesh (TN) 4.15m, 2. Mariya Jaison (Ker) 3.80, 3. G. Sindhushree (Kar) 3.80.

Langer wants LSG's national hopefuls to stay in the present

IPL-17

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

If KL Rahul leads Lucknow Super Giants to its maiden IPL title, he will automatically be rewarded with a spot in the Indian team for the T20 World Cup, reckons head coach Justin Langer, who wants his team's national hopefuls to "concentrate" on doing well for the franchise first.

Rahul, who is coming back from a quadriceps injury and is not expected to keep wickets at the beginning of the IPL, is still not a certainty in the Indian T20 squad and only a good IPL with both the bat and gloves can seal the deal for him.

Loud and clear: Langer wants skipper Rahul to use national selection as a motivation to win the title. SPORTZPICS FOR IPL

Asked how he would balance his skipper's personal ambition with the team's interests, Langer said it isn't all that complicated.

"If the team does well, everyone gets rewarded. If KL can captain LSG to IPL title, that means he would have captained well, batted well and kept wickets well," Langer replied to a query during a season-opening media interaction on Wednesday.

"The message for players, like KL or Bishi (Bishnoi) will be that more they concentrate on playing well for LSG, their chances (of WT20 call-up) will increase."

With foreign recruits Mark Wood and David Willey ruled out of the tournament, the pace bowling unit looks thin on experience.

"It is a very good observation that we lack some experience in pace department but there is enormous talent.

"The pacers –they all look fit, healthy and hungry.

"We need to manage them well not just at start but through the whole tournament. Among pacers Naveen (ul Haq) has played a lot of T20 cricket," he said.

Apart from Naveen, the other overseas fast bowler is Shamar Joseph, the West Indies sensation.

Srikanth and Lakshya make second round

SWISS OPEN

Press Trust of India
BASEL

Former champion K. Srikanth and in-form Lakshya Sen produced impressive performances to progress to the men's singles second round of the Swiss Open super 300 badminton tournament on Wednesday.

Srikanth, the former World No. 1, who had claimed the title in 2015, outwitted World No. 24 Chinese Taipei's Wang Tzu Wei 21-17, 21-18 in a 43-minute contest. It was his sixth win in seven meetings against his opponent.

Later, Lakshya, who had reached back-to-back semifinals at French Open and All England Championships over the last two weeks, outlasted Malaysia's Leong Jun Hao 21-19, 15-21, 21-11 in 62 minutes to set up a clash with Chinese Taipei's Chia Hao Lee.

Srikanth will next face a tough opponent in Malaysia's top seed Lee Zii Jia.

In women's doubles, Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa, seeded sixth, overcame Indonesia's Meilysa Trias Puspitasari and Rachel Allessya Rose 21-18, 12-21, 21-19 in a thrilling opener.

Other results:

Women's doubles: First round: Treesa Jolly & Gayatri Gopichand bt Annie Xu and Kerry Xu (USA) 21-15, 21-12; Ashwini Bhat & Shikha Gautam lost to Yeung Nga Ting & Yeung Pui Lam (HKG) 21-13, 16-21, 21-14.

Rutaparna Panda & Swetaparna Panda lost to Apriyani Rahayu & Siti Fadia Silva Ramadhanti (Ina) 21-4, 21-6; Simran Singhi & Ritika Thaker Tria Mayasari & Ribka Sugiarto (Ina) 21-17, 21-7.

Verstappen eyes perfect 10 at Australian GP

Red Bull's early season triumphs have been tempered by team discord and allegations against boss Horner

Reuters
MELBOURNE

Formula One champion Max Verstappen will bid to win back-to-back Australian Grands Prix on Sunday and match his record of 10 successive race victories even as Red Bull struggles to move on from off-track controversy.

Another chequered flag at Albert Park would see the Dutchman equal last year's run of 10 wins from Miami to the Italian Grand Prix and leave rivals dwindling further in the rear-view mirror.

Verstappen led a Red Bull 1-2 with Sergio Perez at both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, though the early season triumphs have been tempered by team discord and allegations against boss Christian Horner. Horner was cleared of alleged misconduct toward a Red Bull employee but the unidentified woman lodged an appeal after her complaint was dismissed, British media reported last week, ensuring the controversy will rumble on in Melbourne.

Verstappen is already 15 points clear of Perez and 23 ahead of Ferrari driver Charles Leclerc, raising the prospect that both the drivers' and constructors' championships may end up a repeat of last year's procession.

With Red Bull's RB20 performing at a different level to rival cars, the intrigue so far has focused on which team will emerge "best of the rest".

Leclerc finished more than 18 seconds adrift of Verstappen at Jeddah and Ferrari will be eager to close the gap.

Mercedes, touted as a potential destination for Verstappen in 2025 to replace Ferrari-bound Lewis Hamilton, has yet to perform at a level that would impress the Dutch champion. Hamilton finished ninth in Jeddah and lamented three years' of stagnation for the team's car, saying big changes were needed.

Terrific twosome: Verstappen, right, and Perez have got themselves and Red Bull to a great start this season. GETTY IMAGES

Green signal

New look: Royal Challengers Bengaluru players unveiled their green jersey in Chennai on Wednesday. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

BENGALURU ROUND-UP

Narrow win for Jawahar Union

Jawahar Union FC edged out Parikrma FC 3-2 in the BDFA 'A' division football league here on Wednesday.

The results: BDFA 'A' division: Jawahar Union FC 3 (T. Stephen 15, K. Karthik 62, Sanjay Xavier 80) bt Parikrma 2 (Syed Ahmed 53, Ravindra Kumar 80); Bangalore Eagles FC 1 (Y. Awungshi 12) bt RWF 0; ADE FC 1 (S. Stalin 46) bt BTM FC 0.

BDFA 'C' division: IISC FC 2 (Wangshi 17, 38) bt Indiranagar FC 0; JP Sports FC 6 (Kevin 2, 18, Vikram 39, 46, Luke 40, 45) bt Young Boys 1 (Maheswar 60).

KSFA 'C' division: Global FC 2 (Umesh 29, 34) drew with Samura Bangalore FA 2 (Prithvi Jayesh 25, Hrishikesh Singh 30); TAL FC 3 (Chirag Chinappa 7, Goutham Mishra 25, 57) bt Blue Star 2 (Irshad 30, Dhibi Joseph 31).

MRU FA 5 (Pankaj Thapa 5, Rahul Chetry 43, 49, Asif Mondal 57, 59) bt William FC 0.

Universal Blue FC 1 (Daran 59) bt Ronaldo FC 1 (S. Ajith 32).

Sainz all set for Melbourne return

Agence France-Presse
MELBOURNE

Ferrari's Carlos Sainz is set to be back in the cockpit at the Australian Grand Prix this week after recovering from surgery for appendicitis, the team said on Wednesday.

The Spaniard missed the last Formula One race in Saudi Arabia, with 18-year-old British reserve driver Oliver Bearman a late replacement.

The teenage rookie finished an impressive seventh in his debut, driving with the cool aplomb of a seasoned campaigner to underline his huge potential.

Sainz. GETTY IMAGES

But Bearman is set to return to Formula 2 with Sainz fit again.

"Carlos Sainz is expected to be back in the car, having had to miss Jeddah with appendicitis," Ferrari said in its race preview.

Suryakumar remains top batter in T20Is

ICC RANKINGS

Press Trust Of India
DUBAI

Suryakumar Yadav maintained his numero uno position among batters despite being out of competitive cricket for past three months while ace spinner Rashid Khan, back in Afghan jersey after an injury lay-off, is back among top-10 in bowlers' list in the latest ICC T20I rankings published on Wednesday. Surya, who will make a comeback for Mumbai Indians in the upcoming IPL, is way ahead of the pack with 861 points under his belt.

Phil Salt is a distant number two with 802 points. Surya hadn't played any cricket since December, having undergone sports hernia surgery.

Suryakumar. FILE PHOTO

Afghanistan spin wizard Rashid re-entered the elite list of the ICC men's T20I bowler rankings following his contribution in team's 2-1 series victory over Ireland.

In T20I batting rankings, Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan maintained his place at the top of the rankings for T20I all-rounders, with Ireland's Gareth Delany (up four places to 18th) the biggest mover.

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONER, REVENUE DEPARTMENT, BENGALURU DIVISION AND NODAL OFFICER, EX-OFFICIO SECRETARY (ECONOMIC OFFENCES) BENGALURU

2nd Floor, BMTC Building, Shanti Nagar, K.H Road, Bengaluru - 560027

NOTICE/INVITATION FOR E-AUCTION FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

Pursuant to attachment of Immovable properties by the Government under the provisions of the Karnataka Protection of Interest of Depositors in Financial Establishments Act. 2004(KPIDFE Act) and pursuant to the absolute attachment order by the Hon'ble Special Court the Competent Authority for Sri Kanva Souhardha Co-operative Credit Ltd. is issuing notice for e-auction of the immovable property through e-auction on 'as is where is and whatever there is basis'.
The intending bidders will be required to furnish Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (as mentioned against each auction in the e-portal provided by the Service Provider/Karnataka Public Procurement Portal only).

Short description of the Immovable Property

Sl. No.	DETAILS OF THE PROPERTY	RESERVE PRICE (Rs)	EMD (Rs)	Bid Increase Value (Rs)	Clear Title
1.	Agricultural land in Sy No. 18/4 measuring 0 acre 10 guntas and 0 acre 20 guntas totally 0-30 guntas of Honnasandra Village in DasanapuraHobli of Bangalore North Taluk of Bangalore. Bounded by As per GPAR (0 Acre 10 Guntas) :- East by: Remaining agricultural land in Sy. No. 18/4,West by: The property of Sri N Nanjundaiah and Sri Shivalingaiah, North by: Agricultural land of Sri Chikkaiah, South by: The properties of Sri Puttaiah and Sri Mahadevaiah, As per Sale Deed (0 Acre 20 Guntas) :- East by: Remaining agricultural land in Sy. No. 18/4, West by: The property of Sri Nanjundaiah and Sri Shivalingaiah, North by: Agricultural land of Sri Chikkaiah, South by: The properties of Sri Puttaiah and Sri Mahadevaiah Google Location: **https://maps.app.goo.gl/ZG5GzvGfiJ7psJcD7** Latitude and Longitude: 13°06'51.9"N 77°26'34.6"E	1,20,00,000/-	2,40,000/-	60,000/-	
2.	Agricultural land in SY.NO.35/3 measuring 0-11 acres/guntas of Honnasandra village of Dasanapura Hobli of Bangalore North taluk,Bangalore. The said property is bounded by East by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 34/1, West by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 35/2, North by: Remaining land in Sy. No. 35/3, South by: The agricultural land of Sri Gali Ramaiah Google Location: **https://maps.app.goo.gl/cUMQjQ7hF5emeXbP6** Latitude and Longitude: 13°07'02.5"N 77°26'33.5"E	47,91,600/-	96,000/-	24,000/-	
3.	Agricultural land in SY.NO.18/3 measuring 0-36 acres/guntas of Honnasandra village of Dasanapura Hobli of Bangalore North taluk,Bangalore. The said property is bounded by East by: The agricultural land of Smt Chikkamma, West by: The agricultural land of Sri Honnappa, North by: The agricultural land of Sri Shivalingaiah, South by: The agricultural land of Sri Shivalingaiah Google Location: **https://maps.app.goo.gl/dj5uunDWn9q8reV67** Latitude and Longitude: 13°06'51.8"N 77°26'34.6"E	1,56,81,600/-	3,20,000/-	79,000/-	
4.	Agricultural land in SY.No.25/2 measuring 1-00 acres/guntas of Aralasandra village of Kasaba hobli of Nelamangala taluk, Bangalore rural district. The said property is bounded by East by: Boundary line of Koneripura village, West by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 24/4, North by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 25/1 and 24/4, South by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 28/1 Google Location: **https://maps.app.goo.gl/85VfinBTnxhHGmam9** Latitude and Longitude: 13°17'59.0"N 77°19'14.7"E	2,55,00,000/-	5,10,000/-	1,28,000/-	
5.	Agricultural land in Old SY.No.31 and New SY.No.31/2 measuring 1-20 acres/guntas of Aralasandra village of Kasaba hobli of Nelamangala taluk, Bangalore rural district. The said property is bounded by East by: The agricultural land of K.A Ugrasimha Rao and Kumudvati river, West by: The agricultural land of K.P Anandsimha Rao and Karianna, North by: The agricultural land of K.A Jayasimha Rao, South by: Kumudvati river and Boundary line of Madala Kote Google Location: **https://maps.app.goo.gl/m9idRZRZtssfRaiu5** Latitude and Longitude: 13°07'57.8"N 77°19'15.3"E	3,82,50,000/-	7,65,000/-	1,92,000/-	
6.	Agricultural land in SY.No.91(kushki land in 207) measuring 2-05 acres/guntas of Aralasandra village of Kasaba hobli of Nelamangala taluk, Bangalore rural district. The said property is bounded by East by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 30, West by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 27, North by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 28/2, South by: Kumadvati river Google Location: **https://maps.app.goo.gl/377UGa6FCZw2CKpU9** Latitude and Longitude: 13°07'41.3"N 77°19'13.1"E	3,40,00,000/-	6,80,000/-	1,70,000/-	
7.	Agricultural land in SY.No.92 measuring 1-33 acres/guntas of Aralasandra village of Kasaba hobli of Nelamangala taluk, Bangalore rural district. The said property is bounded by East by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 30, West by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 30, North by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 30 and 29/2, South by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 30 Google Location: **https://maps.app.goo.gl/vdXfH8N7DGcQhKTy8** Latitude and Longitude: 13°07'37.0"N 77°19'16.8"E	4,65,37,500/-	9,31,000/-	2,40,000/-	
8.	Agricultural land in SY.No.24/3 measuring 1-10 acres/guntas of Aralasandra village of Kasaba hobli of Nelamangala taluk, Bangalore rural district. The said property is bounded by East by: Boundary line Koneripura village, West by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 26/1, North by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 24/2, South by: The agricultural land in Sy. No.24/4 Google Location: **https://maps.app.goo.gl/x59LX1ZrpYLdexbm9** Latitude and Longitude: 13°07'48.4"N 77°19'14.3"E	3,81,25,000/-	7,63,000/-	1,90,000/-	**Khata Stands in the Name of Competent Authority appointed by the Government.**
9.	Agricultural land in SY.No.24/4 measuring 2-02 acres/guntas of Aralasandra village of Kasaba hobli of Nelamangala taluk, Bangalore rural district. The said property is bounded by East by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 24/5, West by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 26/1 and 26/2, North by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 24/3, South by: The agricultural land in Sy. No. 25/2 Google Location: **https://maps.app.goo.gl/sp9BLkAWng83zbg6A** Latitude and Longitude: 13°07'48.7"N 77°19'14.0"E	6,25,25,000/-	12,50,000/-	3,13,000/-	
10.	Site No. 50, Khata No. 519,measuring east to west 30 feet, north to south 40 feet, totally measuring 1,200 sq.ft.Amani GopalakrishnaKere Village coming within the jurisdiction of Patrenahalli Grama Panchayat of Chikkaballapura Taluk in Chikkaballapura District. The said property is bounded by East by: Site no. 55, West by: Road, North by: Site No. 49, South by: Site No. 51 Google Location: **https://maps.app.goo.gl/17CuotEgtSgnPdFy5** Latitude and Longitude: 13°25'06.7"N 77°46'22.5"E	12,00,000/-	24,000/-	6,000/-	
11.	Site No. 83, Khata No. 552, measuring east to west 30 feet, north to south 40 feet, totally measuring 1,200 sq.ft. Amani GopalakrishnaKere Village coming within the jurisdiction of Patrenahalli Grama Panchayat of Chikkaballapura Taluk in Chikkaballapura District. The said property is bounded by East by: Road, West by: Private property, North by: Road, South by: Site No. 84 Google Location: **https://maps.app.goo.gl/2Ry2s8uKGu37rEak6** Latitude and Longitude: 13°25'06.7"N 77°46'22.5"E	12,00,000/-	24,000/-	6,000/-	

Date of Inspection & time	Date of Pre-bid meeting & time and Place	Last Date of Submission of Bids & EMD submission	Date & Time of E Auction
05th April 2024, 11:00 AM to 05:00 PM	06th April 2024,03:00 PM to 04:00 PM Place : Office of the Regional Commissioner, 2nd floor, BMTC Building, KH road, Shantinagar, Bengaluru-560027	15th April 2024,Until 05:00 PM	19th April 2024, 11:00 AM to 01:00 PM

For registration & Online Auction, you can login to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** (Helpdesk no: 080-46010000, 080-68948777) The interested bidders who require auction related information can contact Additional Regional Commissioner, Office of the Regional Commissioner, 2nd floor, BMTC Building, KH road, Shantinagar, Bengaluru-560027, e-mail id: **arckauction@gmail.com** or Contact No. : **7760275682.**

Place: Bengaluru
Date: 21-03-2024

DIPR/CP/4396/Zen/2023-24

Sd/-
Additional Regional Commissioner And Competent Authority,
O/o The Regional Commissioner, Bengaluru division, Bengaluru.

Halep returns to the court with a loss to Badosa

The Romanian's comeback, after getting her doping suspension reduced on appeal, begins in whirlwind fashion before she loses the plot in the next two sets

MIAMI OPEN

Associated Press
MIAMI GARDENS

Two-time Grand Slam champion Simona Halep returned to professional tennis after getting her doping suspension reduced on appeal, playing her first match in about a year and a half – a 1-6, 6-4, 6-3 loss to Paula Badosa at the Miami Open.

Halep looked terrific in the first set, then encountered trouble later, including having a trainer massage her right shoulder during a changeover late in the second.

She was broken at love in the final game, each point ending with an errant groundstroke: backhand wide, backhand into the net, backhand long, forehand wide.

A step too far: Halep could not keep pace with Badosa despite making a bright start. REUTERS

The 32-year-old from Romania, who reached No. 1 in the WTA rankings in 2017, smiled briefly and waved to spectators as she walked off the court.

The score might not have been what she wanted, but she was back competing.

Badosa, who has been ranked as high as No. 2 but dealt with back problems lately, advanced to a second-round matchup with two-time Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka, the current No. 2. That match is scheduled for Thursday.

Sabalenka 'intends to play' Miami Open after death of boyfriend

Agence France-Presse
MIAMI

World No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka intends to play in the Miami Open, organisers said on Tuesday, following the death of her boyfriend in an apparent suicide. Belarusian former NHL ice hockey player Konstantin Koltsov died late on Monday, police said, after he jumped from the balcony of a room in an upmarket resort in Miami. He was 42. Sabalenka arrived to practice at the Hard Rock Stadium on Tuesday afternoon and organisers said she had not asked to withdraw and was intending to play.

Hockey 5s: Indian men and women's teams ranked second

Press Trust of India
LAUSANNE

The Indian men's and women's teams are both placed second in the maiden Hockey 5s rankings issued recently by the FIH.

The Indian men occupy the second spot jointly with Oman and Malaysia following a three-way tie with 1,400 points each. Netherlands (1,750) lead the pack.

Netherlands (1,750) once again is at the pole position. India (1,550), which won silver at the WC after winning the Asian Championship, is second. Poland (1450) is third.